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PETER GATHERCOLE	Cover picture
ROGER WHITNEY KATHERINE DUNCAN-JONES	
HUGH KENNER	

Full-grown infants

John Bayley

HELEN VENDLER
The Odes of John Keats
336pp. Belknap Press/Harvard University Press. £15.70.
0674630750
DOROTHY VAN GHENT
Keats: The Myth of the Hero
Edited by Geoffrey Cane Robinson
277pp. Princeton University Press. £22.
0691065691
J. S. HILL (Editor)
Keats: Narrative Poems
259pp. Macmillan. £14 (paperback, £5.95).
0333276760

At the beginning of *The Possessed* we learn that Stepan Verkhovensky had written, in the late 1820s "when people were constantly composing in that style", a lyrical-dramatic poem "with a chorus of women, followed by a chorus of men, then a chorus of incorporeal powers of some sort, and at the end of all a chorus of spirits not yet living but very eager to come to life". Such a production was certainly typical of European poetry at a time when personification was being pressed into the service of ideological and idealistic themes, and remained a sort of generic stand-by, used by good and bad poets alike, a favourite with "national" poets like Petöfi, Conrad's father Apollo Korzeniowski, or the Romanian Eminescu, a sign too of the poet's aspirations to produce something "great".

The Ode form, traditional but adapted to any new emotional effervescence, old-fashioned but always capable of being in vogue, was as useful for this purpose to Wordsworth as it had been to Gray, as handy for Pushkin in the third decade of the nineteenth century as it had been to Derzhavin in the eighteenth century. It went with allegory, and its potential was as responsive to discipline as to instability. In his later manner Yeats was still writing what are virtually Odes, and the late Paul de Man has explored the ways in which Yeats remained a persistently allegorical poet. The drafts of the Byzantium poems display the inherent comicality of allegory squeezed into dynamically physical terms, recalling Hopkins's amused comment on a very early poem of Yeats which described a man and a sphinx alone on a rock in mid-ocean: "How did they get there? What did they have to eat?" etc.

Yeats's craftsmanship as a "last romantic" could overcome these incongruities, compelling them to serve the deeper purposes of the poem instead of displaying themselves on its surface. Shelley, his first great love, had also evolved a style which could float over the groundwork of allegory and etherealize its awkwardness. Keats's genius took exactly the opposite course. He explored, exploited and felt his way into the Ode form by drawing attention to the war of the physical and the figurative that went on in it; by emphasizing, however involuntarily, how its shape and diction lent themselves to a kind of felicitous bathos of touch and space.

This shows in the "Ode on Indolence", unpublished by Keats but the seminal poem, as Blackstone observed, for the Odes that followed. Its opening stanza is an instance of "all that information (primitive sense) necessary to a poem" to which Keats refers in the last letter he wrote. The kind of information he had in mind would reveal "the knowledge of contrast" already implicit in the figures who appear to him.

One morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;

Awkwardness is a part of the accuracy, and it is significant that in the first line Keats should exhibit that absolute lack of self-importance so characteristic of the Odes, and so different from the tone essential in Wordsworth ("To me alone there came a thought of grief / A timely utterance gave that thought relief . . .") and in Shelley's Odes. Keats is very much there: in spite of the passive tense the vision is not impersonalized, just as it will not be in the "Ode to Autumn", but it is personal in the kind of sense that Shakespeare's sonnets are; not calmly or excitedly insistent on the novelty of his experiences, as Wordsworth needed to be.

It is typical of Keats that his figures emphasize their actuality in being compared to the figures on a vase, because the vase itself is joined to human movement and domestic manipulation.

They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return . . .

The word *shifted*, and its repetition, epitomizes awkwardness, the necessary awkwardness in stepping as well as in handling. Helen Vendler observes in *The Odes of John Keats* that Keats was never so clumsy again as to transfer figures from vase to vision and back, but Keats's "de-

velopment" in the Odes is precisely a matter of learning to perfect this sort of clumsiness. The end of it is the inspired manipulation of the figure of Autumn. It can also waft the nightingale's song, even though it has been put into decorative Ode language as a "plaintive anthem", past the near meadows, over the still stream, up the hill-side, and into the next valley-glades. Anthems cannot move as live birds can, and as Keats's imagination can see and feel them.

There is irony in the fact that sculpture in Keats's time, particularly funerary sculpture, often engaged in the same kind of three-dimensional mobility which is so effective in the language of the Odes. Barham, in the *Ingoldsby Legends*, describes in deadpan style the strenuous activities in progress among the tombs of national heroes in St Paul's, and the scene

Where the man and the Angel have got Sir John
Moore
And are quietly letting him down through the
floor . . .

With its genius for intermingling the figurative and the literal, Keats's language is able to undertake kinds of mobile composition which were quite beyond the reach of the Regency sculptor's chisel. But that is where its relationship lies, as much as, or more, than with the spirit of an Attic frieze. Autumn, sitting careless on a granary floor, her hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind, could not be a subject for Canova, as Eros and Psyche were, or so many Shelleyan tableaux, but only because she belongs so much to the realm of Keatsian linguistic intensities. The winnowing wind is, in a synesthetic sense, a purely statuesque concept, and was no doubt the reason why Keats had to remove a line ("While bright the sun strikes through the husky barn") whose dust-laden warmth could have cancelled out its cool fluidity. Personified Autumn, sex mysteriously known but not revealed, comes and goes with the same fluid movement throughout the poem, as if its measured language could imagine her extinction in the earth as well as her multiple presence in human form.

The purpose of the Grecian Urn is to heighten contrast between the statuesque and human movement. Barham himself might have asked the question "Who are these coming?" - and emphasis on the perfected stillness of art is only made possible by the incongruous presence of human bustle. Progress is made; maidens become overwrought and the weed is trodden, while at the same time the marble figures are

immobilized in their strenuous enactment of desire or flight. Beauty and truth - the eternally statuesque and the necessarily in motion - are not so much synonymous as poetically and essentially coexistent. The untouched urn, the still unravished bride of quietness, is also "a friend to man", like a helpmate or a dog. Such coincidences, a Shakespearean fusion of the one with the other, are the continuous business of the Odes, of the nightingale as both bird and legend, indifferent as the one and, as the other, comforting as all art can be. The poet both dreams and wakes, confirming the fact by asking which he does; and art itself can be all or nothing, the thing that most moves us and the thing that in our real distress gives no help at all.

These Keatsian coincidences, felt through in a form so dualistically compelling that it comes to seem the essence of the Ode itself, extend to every dimension of his language. The unforgettable dragon's tail, "still hard with agony", of the first cancelled stanza of "Melancholy", calls up its Keatsian opposite, hard with pleasure, while at the same time suggesting a Gothic horror of fixity and finally repulsed by the Ode's movement into joy and sadness, the sadness that can only be comprehended by joy. Completion by rhythmic alternative is expressed by the choir of gnats in Autumn, borne aloft or sinking as the light wind lives or dies. It is the Keatsian equivalent of the bellows and the fan which set on and cool Cleopatra's ardour, and the pun on rising and falling at the end of Shakespeare's Sonnet 151. As Helen Vendler observes, the "full-grown infants" of Autumn are the equivalent of "full-grown infants", a striking Keatsian coincidence which for me embodies not only things dying and things new born but the single identity in this poetry of the infantile and the mature, achieved fruition with ardent attempt, what is "good" and "bad" in the context of Keats's poetry, in fact.

In "The Eve of St Agnes" Madeline is both child and woman, the rose that can become a bud again, and Porphyro is both "puzzled urchin" looking up into the nurse Angela's face and stereotype seducer "brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume". Identity in contrast is, as the formalists would say, the master trope of this wonderful narration, from the tiger in the moth wing, chill and warmth, the young and the old, consummation and vanishing, to the fact that the poem itself is both fanciful and true, a beautifully concocted and derivative confection and a profound vision of life. This in



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itself contradicts the implication of Helen Vendler's study: that the *Odes* are something apart, a progress to perfection above and beyond the rest of the poems. It also validates both essays on "The Eve of St Agnes" in the excellent Casebook, *Keats: Narrative Poems*, one by Earl Wassermann on the poem as a metaphysical construct, "a series of concentric circles"; the other, by Jack Stilling, on "The Hoodwinking of Madeline", and the role in the poem of scepticism, deception and "the ordinary cruelty of life". The essays stand in avowed opposition to one another, Stilling disputing the "metaphysical critics" for whom the poem is a dramatization of Keatsian ideas about spiritual progression, the chamber of maiden thought and the world as a vale of soul-making.

What may strike the reader is the obvious parallel between such opposing interpretations of the poem and different ways of reading Shakespeare's plays. The "behaviour" of Porphyro, as both romantic dreamer and practical seducer, is in one sense as realistically indeterminable as Hamlet's. Despite appearances, the poem is also a surprisingly advanced romantic construct, entering the psychological territory of Kleist's *Die Marquise von O*. Keats had never heard of Kleist, but of all their contemporaries both made, in their own characteristic ways, the most deeply intelligent use of the Shakespearean example. Both, too, were in the grip of personal obsessions. Keats with the image of Fanny Brawne as both innocent dreamer and loose flirt; Madeline's sexual awareness is as latently ambiguous as Ophelia's. In her chapter on "The Ravished Bride" in *Keats: The Myth of the Hero* Dorothy Van Ghent explores at length, and very effectively, the folklore and symbolism in the poem. But the trouble, as with Shakespeare, is that interpretation of Keats necessarily denatures its subject by its very coherence and consistency, its reversal of the strategies of negative capability. Stilling gives the game away by remarking: "Whether *The Eve of St Agnes* is a good poem depends in large part on the reader's willingness to find in it a consistency and unity that may not in fact be there".

That seems to me the wrong proposition. The critic can always find consistency, as both Stilling and Wassermann do, as Dorothy Van Ghent and Helen Vendler also do in their lengthier enquiries into patterns of quest and hero, query and fulfilment. But as with Shakespeare's plays the question is not one of unity but of identity. The identity in contrast in "The Eve of St Agnes", as in the *Odes*, is clear enough to the appreciative reader, even if such a reader is not fully conscious of what it entails in terms of Keats's stylistic personality. In all his major poems there is a naturally dramatic relation between fancy and reality, the two becoming one in the consummation of the poem while not losing their pressing sense of distinction for the poet. "Fancy", he wrote, "is indeed less than a present palpable reality." At the same time Keats knew that his poem existed, like Adam's dream, to turn the imagined into truth. As a whole, *Hyperion*, like *Endymion*, has no true Keatsian identity because Keats has sought – and sought in vain – to give them the kind of overt consistency and unity which the critics are looking for. Truth and dreaming remain schematic, as they do in the lively projection of Lancelotti.

In "The Eve of St Agnes", as in the *Odes*, they do not. The fact is attested by the rival interpretations. Stilling's has the great merit not only of sharpening the identity contrast, though he would not put it quite that way, but of emphasizing the down-to-earth cynicism which Keats was consciously seeking to put into the poem, to make it less "smokeable". Keats's relation to the Byronic stance is always worth emphasizing. He wished to write a poem "for men", a poem that would flitish "twixt a sigh and a laugh", like the Byronic in the amped-up couplet, a poem more like Chaucer than Ariosto. Fortunately he did not succeed, but the identity contrast between the rapacious romantic poet and the restlessly eager young man, having "evil thoughts" about women (touching phrasal) remains a fascinatingly human one. Both are in the poem. Keats, as poet not only imagines in Shakespearean fashion an ego and images it, but enjoys identifying with them as we do not see Shakespeare doing, identifying with Porphyro as "guiltful

seducer and as innocently ardent future husband, with Madeline's empty dress and with Madeline as charmed maid who should never become a woman and have cancer, though the poem shows she will and may. The hoodwinking of Madeline is not condemned by Keats, as Stilling says, for being a dreamer like the knight-at-arms, avoiding in her fancies both pleasure and pain and awakening on the cold hill's side. Keats shares her fancies, as he does those of Bertha in "The Eve of St Mark", but he also shares the ordinary truth of their being, intensified into the spell of his reality.

In a British Academy "Master Mind" lecture on Pindar (January, 1982; published in the *Proceedings of the BA*), Hugh Lloyd-Jones commented on the variations in the patterns of his *Odes* and the instinct for particularity which shows Pindar's mastery of the form. Keats too



makes of the normal properties of the *Ode* something completely characteristic of his own genius. He literalizes the abstract structure of the *Ode*, enlivening it in sometimes clumsy but entirely personal ways, as well as emphasizing its conventional mass and movement. Movement of all kinds is as important in the *Odes* as in the "St Agnes" *Eve* narrative: propositions and queries are moved and shifted like vases, and tranquil certainty seems coincident with instability at each moment. In no other poetry do we ourselves seem both more and less in the text; so that in the "Ode to a Nightingale", for example, we may have the very intense feeling of what it would be like to read it in misery and find no comfort in it, and the feeling that Keats in composition might have been feeling the same.

This is indeed Vendler's starting-point. She quotes Valéry: "When a poem compels one to read it with passion the reader feels he is momentarily its author." From this he knows too that the poem has come off. Such a reader, for Valéry, is like a virtuoso conducting a performance, bringing a score to life by himself becoming its expression and enacting its meaning. Valéry was a poet, and his example could be dangerous for the critic, whose vice, as Auden dryly noted, can be "to treat a work of art as his own discovered document". But Keats can make poets of us all, even of the critic, and Vendler's study of the *Odes* is as sympathetic as fundamentally Keatsian, as it is persuasive. It contains the fullest and most searching expansion of these six poems – "the tale of a brief seven months in Keats's artistic life" – from March to September 1819 – that has yet appeared.

Quoting Valéry's "The virtuoso makes the word flesh" – gives life and real presence to what was merely a piece of writing at the mercy of all and sundry – she modestly comments that "how a work is made flesh in commentary is not so clear as in the case of performance." The metaphor is equivocal, for commentary cannot approach the palpability of the poem, even when "many forms of enquiry – thematic, linguistic, historical, psychological and structural – are brought to bear on it at once". Vendler has also written the best and longest study of Wallace Stevens's longer poems and she tells us that she is reading Keats's *Odes* "under Stevens's implicit tutelage", and that the link of Stevens's comment that "one poem improves

another and the whole".

Keats, whenever he returned in the form of the *Ode*, recalled his previous efforts and used every new ode as a way of commenting on earlier ones. . . . Each ode both deconstructs its predecessors and consolidates them. Each is a disavowal of a previous "solution", but none could achieve its own momentary stability without the support of the antecedently constructed style which we now call "Keatsian". Keats was practising a form of intrinsic self-criticism [and] . . . examined, in a sustained and deliberate and steadily more ambitious way, his own acute questions about the conditions for creativity, the forms art can take, the hierarchy of the fine arts (including the art of poetry) . . . the relation of art to the order of nature, and the relation of art to human life and death.

This could also be a description of Wallace Stevens's poetry, a better description in fact, for obvious reasons, because Stevens is consciously and coherently doing what the critic

Completion in what sense? Reading the *Odes* in terms of a progress to self-knowledge, self-acceptance, of art's reconciliation to life and thought's to sensation, Vendler sees "Autumn" also in terms of an acceptance of death, fruition as the rounding by a sleep from which there will be no awakening. "Cast in the form of a dialogue of the mind with itself", *The Fall of Hyperion* for her looks forward to *Autumn*, the sexually ambiguous figure of Moneta (drawn from Spenser's figure of *Nature* from whose face it could not be seen "whether she man or woman inly were") leading to the appearances of *Autumn* with gender also unspecified, but in ways more subtle and more calm. The gathering swallows – "gather'd" was Keats's first version – suggests "a drawing together to mortality, the paradox in their poem's ending being that the summer's death is most deeply apprehended as a finality, felt by art in the face of nature but with her acquiescence too, since a year, like a life, has gone for good.

All readers no doubt feel something like this, a deep sense of the very lightly mysterious, the music of the *Ode* as Keats's *Tompest*. Certainly the master trope of "Autumn" is to coincide the deepest implication of such meaning with airy lightness and insouciance. "rich in the simple worship of a day". Nothing could be less like *Hyperion* than that. And the more systematic and co-ordinated critical penetration becomes, the more easily the *Ode* evades it. Helen Vendler's envisaging of the choir of gnats as in some sense souls trooping together on death's banks brings us back to those choruses of spirits in the lyric-dramatic poem composed by the elder Verkhovskiy. Yet how important it is that they are small gnats, real gnats! Keats's poetry never mind the symbolic or portentous any more than the facetious: its greatest art in the end, as well as seriously, which is why the overt and official seriousness of *Hyperion* became a kind of death. Or we could say that the seriousness of Keats's art in the *Odes* is never the same thing as the seriousness of the critic's performance of it.

In *The Romantic Mother: Narcissistic Patterns in Romantic Poetry* (143pp. Johns Hopkins University Press: £15. 0 8018 2896 1) Barbara A. Schapiro looks at the way in which women are portrayed in Romantic poetry and at the significance of these poetic images. Using recent studies in narcissism and in the psychology of the self to provide a theoretical framework for her critical analysis, Schapiro examines in detail particular works and shows how these images reflect the poet's personal experience and reveal the psychology of the book and age. Among the texts discussed in *Life Shelley's Alastor and The Triumph of Life*, Shelley's *Endymion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats's *Christabel* and *Franklin's Castle*, Coleridge's *Christabel* and *Franklin's Castle*, and Wordsworth's *Pea-Cockle and The Ruined Castle*.

None the less, Vendler's treatment of the *Odes*, the kernel of Keats's poetic achievement, is so masterly that it will certainly become the standard by which others are judged. She is particularly good on "Autumn", exploring among many other things its relation with Spenser's Mutability cantos, and she finds a singularly touching parallel for the choir of gnats, wailing like orphans, in Wordsworth's comment on himself and his young orphaned siblings, "trouping together as we might". As Allott and Woodruff have shown, the gnats "who form themselves into choirs that alternately rise and fall" derive from Keats's reading of an *Introduction to Entomology* of 1817. Art feeds on books, and Gray's droning beetle appears in many an eighteenth-century poetic context before it finds a final unlikely lodgement in a canto of Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin*. But art also feeds on life. Gray really heard the swallow twitter (Vendler misses that one) and so did Thomson; and Keats listened to it too, as he must have listened to the hedge-cricket that evening, a small whisper by the side of the stubble field that can still be heard on a Hampshire chalk upland in a mild September. Steeped in literature as it is, the *Ode* makes its "information (primitive sense)" as authentic to the reader as if it were the poetic completion of a real experience.

Completion in what sense? Reading the *Odes* in terms of a progress to self-knowledge, self-acceptance, of art's reconciliation to life and thought's to sensation, Vendler sees "Autumn" also in terms of an acceptance of death, fruition as the rounding by a sleep from which there will be no awakening. "Cast in the form of a dialogue of the mind with itself", *The Fall of Hyperion* for her looks forward to *Autumn*, the sexually ambiguous figure of Moneta (drawn from Spenser's figure of *Nature* from whose face it could not be seen "whether she man or woman inly were") leading to the appearances of *Autumn* with gender also unspecified, but in ways more subtle and more calm. The gathering swallows – "gather'd" was Keats's first version – suggests "a drawing together to mortality, the paradox in their poem's ending being that the summer's death is most deeply apprehended as a finality, felt by art in the face of nature but with her acquiescence too, since a year, like a life, has gone for good.

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Lifting the curse

G. S. Kirk

ROBERT PARKER
Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion
413pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.
0 19814835 6

Surviving Greek tragedies give one the impression that pollution, purification and family curses, together with crimes of violence within the family circle, were a fundamental part of Greek life. In some ways, it is true, the concept of defilement and the need to avoid or get rid of it remained important even when curses, rape and incest had ceased to be a serious preoccupation except through drama and literature; even so, tragedy presents a picture of purification and pollution which, when judged by other kinds of evidence, can be seriously misleading. Yet these other kinds are themselves lacunose, prejudiced or otherwise potentially inaccurate; and no one in antiquity itself tried to analyse beliefs at a level much higher than that of Theophrastus' or Plato's caricature of the superstitious man. Our understanding of Greek religion as a whole – with which ideas on pollution intersect at many points – is equally incomplete, and that is a serious disadvantage in attempting to reconstruct even a fraction of what used to be called, with impressive sub-Victorian confidence, "the Greek view of life". Perhaps one reason why some of our leaders have come to consider Greek studies as irrelevant, when before they admired them even to excess, is that those simple and bracing ideas about the Greeks as useful embodiments of archetypal attitudes – towards women, or homosexuality, or freedom, or philosophy, or gods – have fallen prey to hesitant analyses, sociological in kind and often inconclusive in result, of evidence which is patchy, indirect and often far from idealistic in tone.

The present volume is a fine example of the kind of approach to ancient Greek ideology and behaviour that would have made Lowes Dickinson and T. R. Glover turn in their graves. Even E. R. Dodds is respectfully suggested, together with Wilamowitz and E. Meyer, to have been wholly wrong in discovering a drastic change in pollution beliefs, and in Dodds's case a consequent stage of "guilt culture", in the seventh century BC. *The Greeks and the Irrational* is a much easier book to read than *Miasma*; nevertheless the complicated and at times confusing network of doubts, alternatives and reservations at which Robert Parker is adept represents a brilliant and necessary advance in the techniques required for the clearer understanding of such matters among the Greeks.

The second chapter, on birth and death, exemplifies the way in which apparently straightforward cases of obvious physical pollution, at least when judged by the relatively consistent rules and inhibitions of many simple societies, turn out to entail complicated and divergent reactions on the part of ancient Greeks. Birth and death, for instance, came to be outlawed, with varying degrees of severity at different periods, from Apollo's sacred island of Delos; but that was as much a reflection of Athens's claim to be leader of the Ionian world, and of Pisistratus' personal ambitions in particular, as of the attitudes and practices of most ordinary people. In any case it was perhaps as much the particular messiness of birth and death in themselves; that was held to be offensive to the god and inappropriate to his cult-place. Dr Parker is faintly apologetic about having a chapter on sacrifice in a book about pollution, but a kind of purity in and around temples and altars was a prominent and obvious fact of life; that does not precisely explain the need to export parturient mothers from Delos to the accursed soil of nearby Rheneia or Mykonos, but it belongs with that group of ideas rather than those that lay behind the surprisingly perfunctory cleansing enjoined on those who left.

In many parts of Greece, an actual house of birth, destruction, ritual sprinkling, was the commonest action enjoined, symbolic rather than purely hygienic, no doubt – the Greeks were not meticulous hand-washers, and Herodotus expresses his surprise at Babylonians who washed before handling pots and pans after sleeping with their wives. Apart from that, replacement of all the water stored within the house, and (in Argos, at least, on the testimony of Plutarch) the bringing of new fire were normally required; but even midwives or those who prepared a body for burial were not subjected to elaborate segregation or purification. All this seems surprisingly casual in comparison with the rigours of Delos. At least the purification of the hearth, the ritual centre of the household, superficially accords with public rituals in which fire was renewed annually, either by kindling on a mountain-top (associated on Mt Oeta with the self-immolation of Heracles) or by bringing it from beyond the borders – by ship in the case of an island, as at Lemnos which had suffered extraordinary pollution from its over-sexed womenfolk in the mythical past. Even here the motivation, conscious or otherwise, was probably complex, since some of the public new-fire rituals, seasonal in celebration and implication, were likely to have been as much concerned with restoring the sun's energy at the end of winter as with the purgation of impurity. The functions and implications of fire were manifold, and ritual actions connected with fire are particularly hard to assign to one or other set of functions; the *amphidromia*, for example, at which a few days after birth a baby was carried naked round the hearth, and at a run, may have had different purposes "originally", and conveyed many different feelings to the participants quite apart from those of cleansing from pollution.

One of the main difficulties in this kind of investigation is the nature of the sources. It is a great disadvantage that pollution and purification receive so little emphasis in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – although Parker is right not to conclude that they were largely a post-Homeric invention. An accurate guide to religious purifications and prohibitions is provided by the *leges sacrae* contained in surviving but often fragmentary inscriptions on stone, from many parts of the Greek world; but these are mostly Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman in date. The cathartic law from Cyrene of about 320 BC is among the earliest; carefully discussed by Parker in a long appendix, it remains, like an even earlier inscription from Iulis in the island of Keos, highly cryptic. We need to know much more about the assumptions and beliefs – not only the cultic prescriptions – of the full classical age. Here literature is the main guide, and a very deceptive one. Parker points out clearly the special emphases and possible distortions of the different genres; even he cannot quite escape the overpowering influence of the great dramatists, and finds it necessary to append a final and inconclusive chapter on "some scenes from tragedy".

The elaboration of mythical and religious ideas in high poetry presents many problems which need fuller discussion than can be given here, but there are other difficulties too: the relation between the licentiousness of Old Comedy and the generally reserved and decent speech and behaviour of contemporary Athenians is an obvious case in point. Even more

Believing ordinarily

Richard Buxton

JON D. MIKALSON
Athenian Popular Religion
172pp. University of North Carolina Press.
£17.
0 8078 1563 2

Any writer on ancient Greek religion faces a number of special difficulties. First, the evidence is spread thinly over many centuries, and it is often impossible to know how far back to trace a cult or belief first recorded in (say) the second century AD. Second, the quality of the original fieldwork can hardly ever be checked. When Herodotus or Pausanias ascribes a story to a given locality, we should like to know – but seldom do – whether it was told by parents to children, by old men to other old men, or by irritated villagers to a noisy outsider because they thought it was the kind of thing he wanted to hear. Third, answering the question, "What did ordinary Greeks believe?" is peculiarly tricky on account of the heterogeneity of our sources: some details reach us through the researches of Byzantine lexicographers, others through the mediation of untypical geniuses (Homer, the tragedians, Plato).

In the work under review Jon D. Mikalson attempts to outsmart these methodological problems. He avoids the first, that involving chronology, by rigorously confining himself to Athens in the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, and by excluding any data which might threaten to interlope from earlier or later. The second and third kinds of difficulty melt as a result of further acts of self-denial. In Mikalson's view myth was not a part of Athenian popular religion, so myth is not discussed. Nor does he consider the thoughts of those literary and philosophical Greeks about whom so much has been written. By definition their opinions were not "popular". Mikalson's subject is "the views and beliefs which were a part of the common cultural experience of the Athenians and which were spoken of and acted upon daily by average Athenian citizens"; and his preferred sources are inscriptions, the legal speech-writers and Xenophon. (Aristophanes is excluded on the not unconvincing ground that his picture of Athens is an extreme caricature which lay behind the surprisingly perfunctory cleansing enjoined on those who left. In many parts of Greece, an actual house of birth, destruction, ritual sprinkling, was the commonest action enjoined, symbolic rather than purely hygienic, no doubt – the Greeks were not meticulous hand-washers, and Herodotus expresses his surprise at Babylonians who washed before handling pots and pans after sleeping with their wives. Apart from that, replacement of all the water stored within the house, and (in Argos, at least, on the testimony of Plutarch) the bringing of new fire were normally required; but even midwives or those who prepared a body for burial were not subjected to elaborate segregation or purification. All this seems surprisingly casual in comparison with the rigours of Delos. At least the purification of the hearth, the ritual centre of the household, superficially accords with public rituals in which fire was renewed annually, either by kindling on a mountain-top (associated on Mt Oeta with the self-immolation of Heracles) or by bringing it from beyond the borders – by ship in the case of an island, as at Lemnos which had suffered extraordinary pollution from its over-sexed womenfolk in the mythical past. Even here the motivation, conscious or otherwise, was probably complex, since some of the public new-fire rituals, seasonal in celebration and implication, were likely to have been as much concerned with restoring the sun's energy at the end of winter as with the purgation of impurity. The functions and implications of fire were manifold, and ritual actions connected with fire are particularly hard to assign to one or other set of functions; the *amphidromia*, for example, at which a few days after birth a baby was carried naked round the hearth, and at a run, may have had different purposes "originally", and conveyed many different feelings to the participants quite apart from those of cleansing from pollution.)

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matters in his various writings have about them an air of ordinariness which makes him a more straightforward witness than others with noisier and more intellectual axes to grind.

Ordinariness, in fact, is the main characteristic of Athenian popular belief as Mikalson sees it. Before undertaking a major project you prayed to the gods, because that was the proper thing to do. If things went well for Athens, this showed the gods' goodwill. (If things went badly, it was a "daimon" or "fortune" who was to blame.) Poets might claim to know the motives and plans of specific divinities, but ordinary folk had much vaguer notions, and spoke of "the god" or "the gods" as an undifferentiated collective. The gods were not concerned to remedy every act of human injustice; only where their own prerogatives were infringed (sacrilege, oath-breaking) would they act to punish the wrongdoer. You might consult the will of the gods by divination, but – unless you were like Theophrastus' "superstitious man" – you would only do so at a time of personal or public crisis. What of the afterlife? Again, Mikalson's ordinary citizen has very vague notions. Not for him the precision of the literary or philosophical underworlds. The man on the Athenian omnibus was quite uncertain whether his virtues and vices would be duly rewarded after death; what occupied him was not the next life, but this one.

Mikalson's study has many admirable features: it is lucid, helpfully indexed and annotated, scrupulous, unpolemical and short. But from its pages Athenian popular religion emerges as something pale and bloodless; and the main reason is that the author deliberately refrains from examining the myths. Yet these were assuredly part of Athenian popular religious culture. Myths were everywhere – on temple friezes, in songs, on pots. As Plato was well aware, myths were powerful. They were the central element in the great dramatic festivals, events which, however "untypical" the dramatists themselves might be, were nothing if not popular. Trying to figure out in just what ways myths related to popular belief is an enormously difficult enterprise, but it cannot be side-stepped. When Mikalson writes, "We have in our sources virtually no recognition of the harmful aspects of Olympian deities such as appear regularly in, eg, Greek tragedy", he might have added "and in Greek myths of all periods", and have then reflected that here is a paradox which needs exploring. Greek traditional tales ventured into alarming areas of cultural contradiction and ambiguity, areas with which the Athenian speech-writers were evidently unconcerned.

important difficulties arise over the assessment of the great forensic orations surviving from the fourth century BC. The idea that these are especially reliable sources for popular attitudes on morality and public decency, including pollution with which Aeschines in particular makes great play, has a certain attraction – which may, however, be a specious one – the author may not apply quite enough of his usual caution here. Both Athenian juries and the political assembly as a whole seem to have been wide open to irrational and inconsistent types of appeal, especially over matters of personal behaviour and the kinds of pollution this may have entailed. Much that was declaimed by both Aeschines and Demosthenes reflects not so much real attitudes and beliefs (which left few shadows in the hazy wastelands of Greek law) as what a particular group of Athenian citizens, not always the brighter and more sophisticated ones, could be persuaded to swallow on a particular occasion.

What emerges most clearly from Parker's intriguing but difficult analysis (and only a little of it is summarized in the "Epilogue") is that ethnological parallels can be misleading even for the most concrete aspects of pollution and purification among the Greeks; that the development of the city-states and consequent institutionalizing of religious forms produced many distortions in the expected development of such behaviour and beliefs; that practice differed substantially from city to city (and city to countryside) as well as from period to period, quite apart from the differing emphases of the literary genres; and that stress on particular aspects of pollution or purity was often caused by the desire for status-differentiation (the Delian laws being a simple instance of that) as by anything else. This last observation can be applied too rigidly, and the author comes close to accepting without question an interesting opposition in the field of women's festivals, but one often exaggerated by structuralists, between the secret but respectable and matronly Thesmophoria and the louche Haloa, in which clay phalluses were watered like geraniums and the overthrow of normal sexual and marital restraints was furiously urged by the priestesses.

Generally, Dr Parker keeps well clear of such excessively definite models; indeed, one cannot help sometimes wishing that he had tried to establish certain more general principles or tendencies, even of a provisional kind, beyond those associated with van Gennepian rites of passage and Mary Douglas's intuition of purification as the confirmation of social and metaphysical categories. Perhaps he will do that later; meanwhile his substantial and important book has set new standards of perceptiveness and subtlety, quite apart from its sheer learning, in this difficult but rich and revealing field of study.

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Top Muscovites

The criterion he uses to determine who is to be included is whether a man be-

Crummey deals primarily with the social and

Crummey does not deal with the Duma as a political institution, though he outlines its controversial historiography in a useful appendix. Its history has been bedevilled by the anxiety of nineteenth-century historians to approach it from the point of view of its role in the constitution of a limited monarchy, and, as Crummey rightly points out, "pre-modern governments often proceeded on the basis of custom and precedent rather than by general legal definitions". Moreover the lack of records of the proceedings of the Duma is bound to render any analysis of its composition, functions and manner of fulfilling them highly speculative. As an institution it seems to have had more in common with a Privy Council than with a House of Lords. When towards the end of the nineteenth century the Duma reached a nominal membership of over 150, the Tsar inevitably ruled with a small "Cabal" – similar situations led to similar solutions.

Finally, in a brief concluding section he has endeavoured to place the Muscovite boyars in the context of the European nobility as a whole, stressing the similarities, and the most important difference: compulsory service to the Tsar. It is a conclusion which invites further study of Western aristocracies, where the element of service, even if not compulsory, played a larger role than has often been admitted.

Troyat's main weakness is that he knows so little about Alexander's personality that about Russian government or society in the early nineteenth century. This is partly because he has read almost no modern secondary literature on these subjects, and none whatsoever by Soviet, English-speaking or German historians. As a result, Troyat's grasp of Alexander's role in Russian government, or indeed of the constraints on governmental activity in early nineteenth-century Russia, is limited. This makes his comments on Russian domestic affairs at times superficial. However, correct for example, it may be to criticize Alexander for failure to tackle seriously one needs to

Typically, Alexander's secretive and debilitating laziness both over the succession and over the development of secret societies were bequeathed to his brother, the December 1825 uprising, which cast a pall over the whole of Nicholas's reign. Nevertheless, in comparison to his elder brother Nicholas I's virtues stand out. Though narrow-minded and disciplinarian, Nicholas was a man of great personal honor. He was also a hard-working and dedicated monarch who laid the foundations for many essential reforms in Russian administration and justice.

Sir John Merrick: English merchant-diplomat in seventeenth century Russia by Geraldine Philipps (228pp. Oriental Research Partners, £89.250 149.9) was published recently as Volume 13 in the Russian Biography Series. Merrick's role as mediator between the English government and the Russians in his position as member of the Muscovy Company is examined in a monograph.

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Holy Fatherland

The second major development was the rise

Szajkowski's account of the Church's involvement in recent Polish politics is readable, thorough and well illustrated by quotations; the chapter notes are very informative. His judgments are sound, and his comments frank, although "opportunism" seems too strong a

other has been the character of Catholicism in Poland, which is less a matter of specific norms of personal behaviour or doctrinal belief than of one of sentiment, ritual, social custom and national tradition. After the family, the nation is the most meaningful social unit for the Poles. Because of the discontinuity of Polish state life, the Church has for over two centuries served as a repository of national ideals and hopes and as a refuge from harsh political reality. Here lies the explanation of the apparent paradox that while the majority of Poles declare themselves to be believing Catholics, they practise

The book also contains some historical analysis of the Communist campaign against the Church and religion: this is useful, but cannot compare in depth with Szajkowski's treatment. It is further marred by an uncritical commitment to the concept of totalitarianism. Apart from the intrinsic ambiguities of the term, it is hard to see how a political system such as Polish Communism has become since 1956 can be meaningfully described as totalitarian. The evaporation of Marxist-Leninist ideology as an important feature of party life, the concentration on administrative tasks and economic development, the down-playing of terror, the toleration of cultural diversity and above all the accommodation of the Communist régime to the existence of a flourishing independent and critical Church make the label "totalitarian" singularly inappropriate to Poland.

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Hitler, Germans, and the

“Jewish Question”

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مكتبة من الدار

Scrupulously supernatural

Humphrey Carpenter

ALICE MARY HADFIELD
Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work
268pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
0195033116

The greater number of Charles Williams's books are rarely in print, and yet he seems to retain a persistent readership. This was true even in his own lifetime. His poetry only sold a handful of copies. His novels, extravagantly praised by a number of critics, never justified in financial terms Victor Gollancz's commendable decision to publish them. His writings on literature, theology and history fell uncomfortably between the academic and popular markets. Yet Auden thought him one of the most remarkable writers he had ever met; it is possible to discern his influence on Eliot's *Burnt Norton*, and possibly also on *The Cocktail Party*; and the present-day Charles Williams Society is directly descended from the body of enthusiasts who gathered round the man himself in the 1930s, calling themselves the Order of the Co-inherence, after one of his quasi-religious doctrines. All this is distinct from the rather spurious fame he has achieved as a member of C. S. Lewis's Inklings, a body which, as Alice Mary Hadfield points out in this new biography, contributed nothing to his thought and merely provided a little welcome

companionship at the end of his life.

In the introduction to his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, Yeats speaks of omitting from his selection "one or two writers who are not in my story because they seem to be born out of time". Mrs Hadfield plausibly suggests that Yeats may have been thinking, among others, of Williams, whom he certainly knew. Indeed it was Williams who, as an *Oxford University Press* editor, suggested that Yeats be asked to compile the volume. Certainly Williams, his verse and his prose have almost nothing to do with the 1920s and 1930s, during which most of his work appeared in print. If he belongs to any literary period at all, it is surely to the 1890s. Not that there is anything languid or decadent about his writing. Exotic as its subject-matter invariably is, the thought, though often far from clearly expressed, is in itself quite precise and hard-edged. But his preoccupation with the satanic, his use of occult motifs such as Tarot cards and talismans in his fiction, belong to the imaginative world which so delighted the younger Yeats. Williams indeed mixed a little with Yeats's neo-magical circle, joining the Order of the Golden Dawn and dabbling in Rosicrucianism — though in one of the photographs in Hadfield's book the man alleged to be Yeats standing next to Williams does not look much like him. But Williams did not blossom as a writer until the end of the 1920s, when his action-packed "spiritual thrillers" about demonologists in pursuit of the Holy Grail and suchlike seemed strikingly out of their time.

Williams in fact bears a marked resemblance to his near-contemporary Walter de la Mare (though the two apparently never met). Both came from poor, genteel families on the fringes of London. Both from early years felt themselves in touch with a supernatural world that was more real to them than material existence. Both took years to find some adequate way of expressing this — Williams never wholly succeeded. Both married late, choosing wives who had little understanding of their vision. And both afterwards fell in love with another woman, a belated Beatrice. In Williams's case the Muse was Phyllis Jones, a young employee at Amen House, the Oxford University Press's London premises where he worked. She was scarcely more sympathetic to him than his wife had been, and (Hadfield reveals) nearly broke Williams by having a love affair with someone else at the same time. But Williams's extramarital love, again like de la Mare's, was non-sexual, a source of intellectual energy rather than physical gratification, and he celebrated it in poems and masques which revel in this paradox — to one of them he gave the title *The Chaste Wanton*. The de la Mare parallel cannot perhaps be extended much further, but they had an essential quality in common. They were a kind of writer, as T. S. Eliot put it of Wil-

liams, who seems to have "real experience of the supernatural world".

Hadfield makes much the same point when she says of Williams's novels: "One doesn't get much religion, but one gets an enormous, instant idea of God." *War in Heaven*, *The Place of the Lion*, *All Hallows' Eve* and the others remain readable, despite their almost ludicrous plots ("a trifle corny" as Hadfield calls them) because they are completely convinced of their own truth about the supernatural. Hadfield does not go very far to explain why this should be so. The almost strictly biographical format of her book, a reworking of her long-out-of-print *Introduction to Charles Williams*, seems at times uncomfortably suited to a man whose ideas require considerable explanation, but whose life, though melodramatic, is quite comprehensible. It might have been better to separate the biographical material from a discussion of the writings. However, in purely biographical terms there is a considerable advance on the earlier volume, in which the difficulties of Williams's marriage and his subsequent love affair had to go unmentioned because his wife was still alive. It seems unlikely that Mrs Hadfield's book will make many new converts to Williams; but then he is apparently still doing that for himself.

Irascible first paddle

Rosemary Dinnage

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242pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
0091543304

To an outsider, the picture of Arthur Koestler that emerges from the affectionate descriptions in these two books of his closest man friend and closest woman friend is unappealing. Koestler clearly was generous, self-aware and suffered from conflict and depressions that partly excused some of his worst excesses — fights, drunken driving, poisonous quarrels — but he was grossly egocentric, irascible and, to his women, promiscuously unfaithful. Cynthia Koestler, his companion of thirty-odd years, had to have two abortions; when a former mistress brought his illegitimate baby to England for a visit he refused to see the child. On a more mundane level, he seems to have been one of those bores who force unwanted food and drink on guests and goes into a tantrum if it is refused.

The fact remains that George Mikes, temperamentally Koestler's sunny opposite, stayed a friend for many years and writes of him with affection, though without illusion. If Koestler was something of a monster, evidently it was the likeable rather than the mean-spirited type of beast. Mikes writes about Koestler's cold and repressive mother, about his generosity towards various good causes, the passion of his campaign against capital punishment, his stoicism under the onslaught of illness and old age. He writes, too, of course, about his immense breadth of knowledge and experience and the skill with which they were poured with unstoppable fluency into book after book.

Mikes also deals with Koestler's relationship with Cynthia Koestler, which is the focus of the joint autobiography, *Stranger on the Square*, left unfinished at their death. Six chapters written alternately by the authors take us up to 1951, when Koestler was married to his second wife and Cynthia was his devoted young secretary; six more chapters by Cynthia continue the story to 1959, when the two were accepted lovers in London. (Koestler declared himself unsuited for marriage, says Mikes, and they only married in 1965 because he had accepted an American Fellowship and could not "live in sin" on the campus.) As Harold Harris, who has edited *Stranger on the Square*, points out, the narrative ends when they still had nearly thirty years of living together ahead of them.

The 1980s are not a good time for appreciating a story of total female devotion such as Cynthia Koestler's; at another time or in another place it might have been considered exemplary. When the young South African secretary went to meet her future employer, "he did not say any polite, reassuring words" — indeed, he commented that she did not seem to have much confidence, and she blushed and silently agreed. She worked for him part-time, earning enough for her lodging and breakfast and going hungry the rest of the time: "It never occurred to me to tell Arthur and Mamie of my sorry plight." If she ever made a typing mistake "an expression of irritation would flash across Arthur's face; he might even bring his fist down on the desk with a little rap." When the Koestlers went to America she was desolate; but Mamie Koestler was ill, there was no one to Hoover and cook and type, and Cynthia was sent for from London. "This is all too wonderful for words," she wrote, "I JUST SIMPLY CAN'T BELIEVE IT!... I shall try not to be a bother to you."

When Koestler was dictating, she noticed, he would get infuriated at the sound of pigeons cooing on the roof and hang the chimney breast with a fire-iron (less docile than she, they went on cooling). If caught in a traffic jam he would leapfrog to the head of the queue, to the sound of indignant hooting. When she was staying with him in a Paris hotel, she found him sleeping and calling the name of another girl friend: "Perhaps I should have felt jealous, but I only felt lucky to be sharing his life." They were on their way at the time to the South of France for a canoeing holiday; Koestler's description of her in an article he wrote about the trip was "a friend who plays second paddle and who shall be called 'Crew'."

It sounds sad, but perhaps it wasn't. Koestler was well aware of the pattern of his life; he wrote in a diary that "I always picked out type: beautiful Cinderellas, infantile & inhibited, prone to be subdued by bullying." This seemed a fair enough description of Cynthia Koestler at any rate during the time she covers in this book. She, on the other hand, was blind to her affections: when he dictated something about his "inferiority complex" she wondered what he meant. "Somehow I had miraculously managed to turn a blind eye towards this side of him," and it seems to have been some eight years after she met him that she first noticed his heavy drinking — "In all the years I had known him I had never been aware of this." Behind the story as we read it lie all the complexities, however, of the story we don't know: of why she outlasted the other women, of what he gave her, of why it satisfied her to play second fiddle. And in his suicide note Koestler wrote that it was to her that he owed the relative happiness he enjoyed in the latter part of his life — "and never before".

Down to the sea with nets

Angus Calder

PAUL THOMPSON with TONY WAILEY and TREVOR LUMMIS
Living The Fishing
416pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £13.95 (paperback, £7.95).
0710095082

Paul Thompson explains that the research from which *Living The Fishing* arises was triggered by the discovery, through interviews for his book *The Edwardians*, that early in this century the "most generally 'progressive' parents in Britain" — those who treated their children with least brutality and most respect — were found in Shetland. Implicitly, this study tilts throughout against the "enormous condescension" (to borrow a phrase from another Thompson) of intellectuals who have represented "fisherfolk" as skeezy and heroic yet dismissed their values as archaic or retrogressive. Thompson and his associates have used some 160 interviews, collected in the 1970s with people involved in the industry, in an effort to project its history from the inside. The result is mostly convincing and always fascinating.

Their combination of oral and documentary sources brings into vision moral and economic phenomena which, these authors suggest, cannot yet be fully explained by the deployment of theories drawn from Marx and Weber. They offer a general survey, with local close-ups, of the history of British fishing since industrialization. Markets have boomed and slumped, shoals have shifted, seas have been overfished, and in response to that nations dependent on

them have imposed territorial limits. While big capital created a waged and hideously exploited labour force in trawling, drifting or herring converted to steam under small owners with crewmen working for shares. Friends of Reaganite "freedom" will hardly relish the suggestion here that capitalism, as represented by Aberdeen, Hull and Grimsby trawler-owners, destroyed its own prospects by demoralizing its work-force and depriving it of the zest for innovation necessary in new conditions, but unreconstructed Marxists may jibe at the notion that "If there is to be a future in British fishing it will be with the inshoremen of the North", with its offered corollary that the "sea-peasantry" of Buckie on the Moray Firth and the local entrepreneurs of Burra and Whalsay in Shetland have lessons to teach all of us about how we might live as adventurous individuals, yet in egalitarian community.

The seventeenth-century Dutch had swarmed in the North Sea, barrelling herring for their huge export trade to Eastern Europe, and meanwhile English merchant capitalists had exploited the Newfoundland banks to supply Mediterranean Papists with dried cod. However, coastal communities fully dependent on fishing remained rare in Britain until industrialization brought growing urban markets, railways to carry fresh catches to them, and steamships to help meet resultant demand. The potted shrimp is not traditional fare — it was developed when the railways reached Lancashire, not long after a Newcastle man settled in Yarmouth had invented the kipper. Before those heady days, "amphibious" villages had combined fishing with farming and other land pursuits. Crabbe's Peter Grimes, as a special-

ist, was unusual. But as trawling flourished his vicious treatment of his apprentices was institutionalized. "In Grimsby apprentice boys made up nearly a third of the crews of the sailing smacks in the 1870s", when imprisonments for absconding were running at 500 a year. This abuse was checked, but near-servitude persisted — English deckhands remained subject to a penal discipline which in the 1920s was extended to Scottish trawlermen.

With men rarely together in port, unionization was fitful and for long ineffectual. Even in the 1960s, after organization had improved, conditions remained exceptionally harsh — trawlermen then had a fatal accident rate twenty times that found in manufacturing industry, and this did not include fractures, injured backs, lost fingers, septal cuts, or the endemic alcoholism fostered by duty-free perks. In Thompson's view, the Aberdeen trawler-owners met just nemesis at last, after degrading entire communities of fishermen who were sucked into their operations.

Tony Wailey contributes four very interesting chapters to *Living The Fishing* on Lancashire, and Trevor Lummis a lively and incisive one on superstition in the East Anglian fisheries, but the book's intellectual thrust is finally carried through Thompson's own chapters on Scotland and Shetland. These complement the work of another Englishman, Ian Carter, on the North-Eastern agricultural peasantry; perhaps only such outsiders can clarify the Scot's vision of the North, where divisions of language, religion and class have created potent mythologies, bitterly contested.

Why is Lewis, an island in prime fishing waters, so backward in the industry, despite

the efforts of incomers since the days of James VI and his "Fife Adventurers" to drag it forward? Its inhabitants, Thompson suggests, cling to land, much of which they quite literally reconquered from alien owners in this century. Repeated threats from outside to their Gaelic culture have made Lewismen suspicious of innovation. The Free Church which dominates their society enforces a patriarchal, and fatalistic, conformity. As fishing in general boomed a hundred years ago, Shetland's situation was superficially similar — here, too, the plough was not used in some parishes till the First World War. But Shetland people seized and have kept initiative in fisheries which they have successfully adapted to changed times. A Norse seafaring tradition, active promotion of fishing by profit-minded resident lairds (albeit these were Scottish colonialists and were resented), a diversity of religious sects encouraging tolerance and independent-mindedness — these have all helped, and also, so Thompson argues, an egalitarian outlook which gives women due recognition for their importance in the fishing-farming economy and accords respect to children.

With Shetland, Thompson ends his book on a note of visionary optimism. Here is a free, friendly society, worthy of being imitated (though North Sea oil may be damaging its remarkable culture). The dour evangelicals of Buckie, however estimable, hardly offer such an enticing blue print for the future, though at least Thompson proves that Bill Forsyth's film *Local Hero* isn't the last word on North of Scotland morale. Forsyth's cheery opportunists would happily sell out to big business. Not so the men — and women — of Buckie, a place of one-time complete insignificance which by 1913 claimed a third of the Scottish steam herring fleet. There is a community led by skipper-owners — or maybe, as commentators have often suggested, by their wives.

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Putting out from Nefyn

Stephen Mills

J. IOR DAVIES
Growing Up Among Sailors
205pp. Gwynedd Archives Service. £3.95.
090133734 X
ALUN OWEN
The Whalers of Anglesey
86pp. Gwynedd Archives Service. £2.50.
0901337331

John Ifor Davies has written a tribute to his father, Captain William, who skipped the very last full-rigged British sailing ship to round the Horn. Captain Davies has gone down in sailing history as a man beloved of his crew, not least for his doughty resourcefulness.

On a voyage to Buenos Aires in 1919 a seaman's hand jammed in the rigging and at least one finger dropped to the deck, but with no formal training the captain got the damaged digits back where they belonged and working again. Two years later, on his way to New South Wales, Captain Davies himself had an accident. During a storm he fell through the ship's floor and hung by the neck between the torn planks. When his officers picked him out they lacked the courage to sew up his throat so he had to abandon his teetotal pledge, dose himself with alcohol and do the job with his own hands and the aid of a mirror.

In a life at sea, toughness was taken for granted. The author's mother was initiated a few weeks after her wedding in November 1905. She joined her husband on his exquisite three-masted barque, the Gwydyr Castle, and during the couple of days between Rotterdam and London the vessel capsized. Someone in Rotterdam had apparently economized on ballast. On their next voyage they were docked in Valparaiso when the terrible earthquake of 1906 struck and they watched from the crests of the tidal waves as the town disintegrated. They passed the Peruvian Guano Islands where the Chinese coolies were worked to death and the heads and limbs of their carelessly buried bodies left sticking up out of the bird lime. And they also raced their ship. His mother's diary has a rousing account of how, in the South Pacific spring, they were neck and neck with the Western Monarch round the Horn and, though they lost sight of her after a few days, they must have sailed abreast all the way home, since they only beat her fully roundabout 650 couple of hours.

Mother and numerous children spent seven years at sea with their father, until they were parted and marooned by the demands of school. Home was the little Caernarfon port of Nefyn whose landscape was enlivened for children by small things, like gardens full of lizards and cornercrakes, that are now passing out of memory. Enlivened too by family characters, it held Uncle Dai who had been at watch in the fog in New York harbour when his ship rammed a tug-boat and killed all hands. Uncle Dai still threw epileptic fits in which his faithful dog always joined him. Then there was the inevitable Auntie Annie, who produced myriads of cats and always called them Miss Andrews or Lloyd George.

This intimate, nostalgic account ends with the death of Captain William during that historic last sail round the Horn. Knowing sailships were finished he had intended to retire. He had not seen his family for three and a half years but after being nursed for two months at sea by his first mate he finally gave up trying for home and put into Rio where he is buried.

Emily

That night you slept in the crook
of my left arm

I woke

at 3 or 4 a.m.

to find it numb,
a knotted, phantom limb.
I called you by another's name:
Emily.

You looked at me no less scathingly
than I innumerable
through a tree

long before he ever swung his axe:
"This one's bird's-eye maple,
good for fiddle-backs."
PAUL MULDOON

The first single-handed circumnavigation of the globe, by Joshua Slocum in the 1890s, took well over three years. Philippe Jeantot, winner of the 1982-83 BOC Challenge, completed the course in five months. The story of the single-handed round-the-world yacht race — described by Robin Knox-Johnston in his introduction as "arguably the hardest sporting or adventurous feat yet discovered by man" — is told by Barry Hockall in *The Ultimate Challenge* (176pp. Orbis. £12.50. 0 85613 560 7).

Scribing-out inscape

Peter Redgrove

ERIC GILL

A Holy Tradition of Working: Passages from the writings of Eric Gill
Introductory essay by Brian Keeble
140pp. Golgonooza Press, 3 Cambridge Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk. £8.95.
0 903880 30 X

The Engravings of Eric Gill
545pp. Christopher Skelton, Skelton's Press, Castle Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 1LW. £11.10.
0 9503226 3 6

In his *Autobiography* Eric Gill tells us about his sensations as he watched Edward Johnston, his calligraphy teacher, for the first time. When he saw the writing that came as he wrote, I had that thrill and tremble of the heart which otherwise I can only remember having had when first I touched her body or saw her hair down for the first time . . . or when I first heard the plain-chant of the Church . . . or little saw the North Transept of Chartres from the first alley between the houses . . . I was struck as by lightning, as by a sort of enlightenment . . . sometimes when you are drawing the human body, even the turn of a shoulder or the firmness of a waist, it seems to shine with the radiance of righteousness . . . it was no mere dexterity, that transported me; it was as though a secret of heaven were being revealed.

When a man's art is mixed up not only with his political and religious beliefs but with his sexuality as well, and he sees all this as a whole, and says it plainly, the Establishment tends to draw its skirts aside. Eric Gill has dwelt under something of a cloud for many years. He did not fit in with the art for art's sake School of Paris ideologies, and was partially eclipsed by his great contemporaries Moore, Hepworth and Nicholson. Moreover, he was not just a sculptor, or solely a typographer, he was an engraver and trenchant writer too. He would not confine himself within specialisms, and always did his best to demolish the distinctions between fine and applied art.

Moreover, either the Catholicism or the sensuality seemed problematic, depending on your viewpoint. Gill was undoubtedly a very sexual man, as his painstakingly kept diaries and journals recording details of masturbation and infidelity show, and such sexual-mystical experiences as the above-quoted were at the

heart of his art. He describes his carvings for the London Underground headquarters as "attempts at 'love-making'" in one letter, and in another he says "the best route to Heaven is via Elephanta and Elura and Ajanta".

One would hope that testimony to such an important "determining influence" would be represented in an anthology of Gill's writings. Brian Keeble says that he has not attempted to represent every nuance of Gill's thinking on "the nature of art, beauty and workmanship", but he has in fact selected for the celibate angle and the scholastic manner. It is the side of Gill's writing that Lawrence hated, calling it "argufying"; it is the "dry legalistic element" that John Rothenstein deplored in Gill's mind that existed "in spite of his Nonconformist origins". The allegiances that should arise for the artist through the experience of holiness are painfully teased out in logical propositions, but the foundation is missing, the lightning-strike, the "radiance of righteousness", and therefore the "holy tradition" is incomplete. One can see that the book might very well serve as a severe catechism for the serious artist questioning his place in the modern world; but he would need the inspiration of Gill's visual works as well. I am not sure that a reissue of the *Autobiography*, at one time very popular but now out of print, wouldn't have served better. "Man is matter and spirit, both real and both good",

says Gill, but not here. "and the funny is certainly part of the good."

Gill was, I believe, theologically very close to Hopkins. The latter's declaration of God's grandeur, "like shining from shook foil" in the Thinness or *hucceitas* of anything, once its inscape had been grasped, seems to me like true Gill, while scholastic logic-chopping by itself is not. "About all the turns of the scaping from the break and flooding of the wave to its run out again I have not yet satisfied myself" says Hopkins in diary notes that any sculptor might be proud of: "to make out how the comb is morselled so fine into string and tassel . . . saw big smooth flinty waves, carved and scuppled . . .". Such scribing-out of inscape is immediately present on opening Gill's *Engravings*. Often the "bounding lines" are like waves of pleasure in a kind of visual echo-sounding that explores posed face or figure. There is much wit, too, and explicitly sexual joy – and here the *Engravings* tend to contradict the Selection. For example, Brian Keeble cites the following from *Beauty Looks After Herself*: "But the lovely and the beautiful are mixed because man is matter as well as mind. Hence man's work is concerned with both the beautiful and the lovely. But art is specifically concerned with the beautiful . . .". Unfortunately for Gill's written thesis, the engravings are both beautiful and lovely.



From Jim Ede's *A Way of Life: Kettle's Yard*, reviewed on this page.

Interdisciplinary influences

D. F. L. Chadd

ANDREW KAGAN
Paul Klee: Art and Music
176pp. Cornell University Press. £19.50.
08014 1500 4

"Music was so intimate a part of his being, transmuted into visual qualities whenever he stood before his easel or drawing-board, that it seems to flood through all his work." So wrote Will Grohmann in his monograph *Paul Klee* (1954). This judgment seems to have received general acceptance, yet it is so vague and all-embracing that it demands to be given some precision. Andrew Kagan's stance on this subject is broadly that of Grohmann. In the long run, however, *Paul Klee: Art and Music*, for all its detailed analyses, does not advance the subject much beyond its rather unfocused starting-point.

Matters of interdisciplinary influence are notorious for their need of delicate handling. There is likely to be little in the way of conventional hard evidence, and the temptation to force points has to be resisted. Kagan gets off to a bad start in his lengthy introductory chapter, based largely on Klee's published diaries. These were jottings, not written for public consumption and frequently gnomish in character. They need very careful use, but in this book they do not get it. Sometimes the interpretation is frankly misleading. Klee's "increasing concern with the concept of formal autonomy" after 1905 rides roughshod over the quotation (Diary no 845, of 1908) on which it is based: "The form occupies the foreground of our interest. It is the object of our efforts. It belongs to the first rank of our matter. But it would be wrong to conclude from this that the contents

that it embraces are secondary." Elsewhere distinct entries are strung together without differentiation, sometimes even with phrases silently omitted, to make a pattern which falsifies what Klee is actually saying.

This sort of carelessness for the subtleties of the subject leads to narrow views which miss some of the most suggestive evidence. Klee's debt to Delaunay, according to Kagan, resides primarily in Delaunay's defining for him the means to achieve the elevation of colour to the status of an architectural principle. This, says Kagan, is the sort of thing to which Delaunay's "simultaneity" referred. Now Kagan is quite right to claim that in visual terms and in verbalized ideas Klee follows Delaunay carefully and owes much to him. But one of the things that must have stirred him most about the Frenchman was how he had brought into his painting, and into the ideas with which he discussed it, the temporal dimension which so instinctively fascinated Klee. In the important diary entry no 1081, for July 1917 (which Kagan twice quotes in part, stopping before the crucial section) Klee is quite articulate about this: "Delaunay strove to shift the accent in art on to the time element, after the fashion of a figure, by choosing formats that could not be encompassed in one glance". It is surely the dynamic aspects that Klee is drawing out, just as in his teaching at the Bauhaus he was to stress the activity of painting, the creation of visual effects as a physical performance, not unlike that of the musician. In one of his earliest letters to his wife, after his arrival at the Bauhaus he tells with obvious fascination of a class at which he was present:

After a few turns round the room the master went over to an easel holding a drawing board and said: "Now, let's see a piece of music. The body is not

then suddenly he made two strokes in swift succession. Two strong lines, vertical and parallel, appeared on the scrap paper. The students were asked to imitate them. The master looked over their work, had a few of the students do it over again, checked their posture. Then he ordered them to do it in rhythm . . .

The strength of the impression this made on Klee is vividly conveyed. Here, one would think, we were close to the heart of the reactions which drew him back again and again to musical analogies. Yet to Klee the performer and to the performer's aspect of music Kagan hardly does justice. It is a theme which would have given shape to his chapter "Operatic Paintings". Margaret Plant, in her *Paul Klee: Figures and Paces* (1978), a book which Kagan seems not to have used, has already drawn out the gestic element in Klee's work and its relationship to Bauhaus activity. These are matters which are central to Klee's perception of music.

It is a crucial weakness of this book that it avoids the asking of simple and direct questions by pursuing hypotheses whose ground is barely tenable. So the whole of the first part revolves around an interpretation of the 1932 canvas "Ad Parnassum" as a kind of homage to the musical treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* of J. S. Bach. Kagan says quite plainly that there is no evidence that Klee even knew this book; but by an amazing sleight of hand "there can be no question of Klee's familiarity" with it. On the contrary, there is a great question about it, until someone demonstrates the fact clearly. Nor can one take an analysis of "Alter Klang" as a reworking of Leonardo's St John the Baptist on a basis hardly firmer than that the author would like it to be so. This type of thing comes close to playing fast and loose with evidence, and it is only the reverse of a persuasive effect.

Ede tells us that when he moved into Kettle's Yard in 1957 he was troubled by a sense of personal and religious failure. He immersed himself in the writings of religious mystics. He

Fusions

Frances Spalding

JIM EDE
A Way of Life: Kettle's Yard
253pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 25062 5

The subject of this large book is a small house in a busy, congested area of Cambridge. Before a modern extension was added in 1970, Kettle's Yard consisted of four ten-foot-square cottages which at one time had been condemned as slum dwellings. Jim Ede, its creator, wanted to combine three things: his pleasure in elegant living conditions, his joy in art and delight in nature. Objects and furniture were found, some carried across continents; paintings and sculptures were bought as well as given; dried flowers and feathers collected in glass globes, stones and shells gathered on mantelpieces, window-sills and tables. One the work was complete Ede began the custom that still continues, of opening Kettle's Yard every afternoon to public gaze. In 1973 he moved to Edinburgh and gave the house and its contents to the University of Cambridge. It remains as he intended, less a museum than "a continuing way of life".

This book provides a travelogue on the house. The photographic illustrations, in keeping with the Kettle's Yard aesthetic, are simple and direct; they avoid the distortions of the wide-angled lens and the glamorous effects of colour. Ede's text provides a commentary. His habit of praising the quality of the photographs is slightly irritating; and his protestations, as when he says "the extraordinary quality of light . . . holds me silent", on occasion inhibit the reader's response. The frequent inclusion of quotations from Shakespeare, the Bible and religious verse contributes to the first impression that this is a coffee-table book for the mystically inclined. But it also provides glimpses of a critical intelligence at work: Ede analyses the contents of each photograph and advocates, for example, the removal of one of two identical chairs which together seem "too matey", or he advises on the exact space needed between objects for them to communicate. He also draws the reader's attention to details that are easily missed when visiting the house; one instance is the row of banisters at the top of the stairs, inserted upside-down to create a more fitting balance.

Ede was closely associated with many of the artists whose work he bought. He admits a particular debt to Winifred Nicholson who taught him much "about the fusing of art and daily living". Also influential was a visit to Brancusi's studio in 1927 where the simplicity of the surroundings and the white paper on which the artist served lunch made Ede see the glasses, knives, butter, radishes and French loaf as objects of wonder. At Kettle's Yard the quality of stone, brick, glass or wood is never disguised, in keeping with the 1920s aesthetic of "truth to materials". It is this sensitivity to material presence that animates some of the most enjoyable paintings in the collection, especially those by Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood and David Jones. It also contributes, paradoxically, to the sense of spirituality that pervades the entire house.

Ede tells us that when he moved into Kettle's Yard in 1957 he was troubled by a sense of personal and religious failure. He immersed himself in the writings of religious mystics. He

In death as in the Life

Blake Morrison

WILLIAM GOLDING
The Paper Men
192pp. Faber. £7.95.
0571 13206 5

Few recipients of the Nobel Prize for Literature can have had as trying an inauguration as William Golding. Scarcely had the award been announced last October when Arthur Lundkvist, one of the Swedish judges, broke ranks and judicial silence in unprecedented fashion to declare that Golding was "a little English phenomenon of no special interest", a remark he subsequently retracted, but not before at least one English commentator had unkindly endorsed it. Some weeks later the powers of Golding's imagination came under question from a different quarter when Auberon Waugh in the *Spectator* claimed that Golding's "one good novel", *Lord of the Flies*, bears a remarkable resemblance to W. L. George's little-known novel of 1926, *Children of the Morning*, which describes the violent behaviour of a group of children shipwrecked on a tropical island. Golding might not be guilty of "conscious plagiarism", Waugh argued, "but the book does seem to have had an extraordinary subliminal effect on him", and he suggested Golding donate to W. L. George's descendants at least a tin of pickled herrings out of his prize-money. Now, two months later, Golding's latest novel has appeared to almost unanimous condemnation: "a tin-eared disaster", "a hollow creation", "a gesture of humility", "out of focus", "unfunny", "irritating" – these have been some of the verdicts, while the best that others have said is that serious writers must be allowed their failures. Winning the Nobel Prize may have helped Golding's sales (*The Paper Men* is currently top of the bestseller lists, ahead of the Dick Francis and Len Deighton) but it is not clear that it has done his literary reputation any more good than it did Winston Churchill's.

The plot of *The Paper Men* is a simple and by now familiar one. Where Golding's last novel, *Rites of Passage*, hinged on events occurring in a "badger bag", his new one begins with a "badger at the bin", the badger being Professor Rick L. Tucker of the University of Astrakhan, Nebraska (hence Tucker's T-shirt emblazoned "OLE ASHCAN"), who is rooting in the dust-bin of Wilfred Barclay, the famous English novelist, in the hope of finding Barclay's letters and manuscripts useful to his academic research. Barclay narrowly avoids shooting Tucker, an oversight he soon comes to regret: for as he leaves his home in rural England to take up an itinerant life abroad, crossing the patchwork of Europe ("Yurp" as Rick calls it) as restlessly as Nabokov's Humbert Humbert does North America, leaving behind him one broken relationship in England (with his wife, Liz) and then another in Italy, he finds Tucker dogging his footsteps with dreadful persistence. In Schwillen, on Lake Zurich, Tucker introduces Barclay to his lovely young wife Mary Lou; Barclay is attracted to her but flees, "determined to sear this tiny bud of the future before it was in leaf". At the Hotel Felsenblick, in the Weisswald, Tucker catches up with Barclay, asks him to appoint him as his official biographer, and apparently offers him the body of Mary Lou in return for a signed acceptance; again Barclay is tempted, and again he resists and flees, but not before an expedition through the mountain fog during which he stumbles and is saved by Tucker from falling into empty space: "It seems I owe you my life" (of Joelein to the dumb sculptor in *The Spire*: "I owe my life to you, it seems.")

But owing Tucker his life makes Barclay only more determined not to assign him his past; as he sketchily recalls it, has not been without interest: public school; early Etonian days as a bank clerk; a spell as a groom; the stupendously successful first novel; a ready supply of women, including the nymphomane Lucinda; a scandal with a bent solicitor and some obscene letters; and travels in South America, during which he ran down a native (Tucker says if you stop the other Indians will kill to be orderly, still and quiet. He aimed at a creating in Cambridge "a pool of silence"). After visiting Kettle's Yard one is obliged to accept his counter-remark: "Most people's houses are hurricanes."

She was not going to write a thesis on anything as dull as a dead man. She wanted fresh blood. She was the going out with her critical shotgun to bring home the living. She proposed I should bare my soul, answer all her questions, do all the work, and she would write the thesis on me. But years first of reading these on me and then more years of not reading these on me have made me more elusive than a professor . . . I am a moving target.

On one level, Golding's novel does little more than animate the metaphor of this passage, developing it to make a general statement in defence of the individual imagination against the threat posed to the living (English) writer by the dead hand of (American) scholarship, and also to provide the novel with its dramatic (or melodramatic) framework: the novel opens with the gun in Barclay's hand; but

at all, let alone by a drudge like Tucker. His efforts to escape Tucker's badgering drive him to even more frenzied world travel. His heavy drinking becomes heavier, his hallucinations more hallucinatory, his black holes blacker. "Dipso-schizo", he loses track of years. In Greece he bumps into an old homosexual friend who advises him to "get rid of the armour, the exoskeleton, the carapace, before it's too late". It is advice he seems unlikely to take, but at some point afterwards he has a minor stroke and breakdown, and when he recovers determines to let Tucker "complete things": he will offer Tucker his life while submitting him to some "theologically witty" punishment.

As he waits for Tucker in the Weisswald, Barclay retraces their earlier walk through the mountain fog and discovers that the "abyss" Tucker saved him from was a gentle Alpine meadow "about a yard" under the path. Incensed at being (theologically) outwitted, he returns to accuse and humiliate Tucker, taunting him with the promise of the official biography but refusing signed confirmation. In the novel's last flurried chapters Barclay returns to England, to his ex-wife Liz (now dying of cancer); spurns Tucker again in a London club; prepares a bonfire of his manuscripts; and types up "this brief account" – the Life he denied Tucker, told by himself to "set over against the lying stories, the partial journals, and all the rest". As he looks up from his desk he sees Tucker peering at him "through some instrument or other. How the devil did Rick L. Tucker manage to get hold of a gu".

A mark of Golding's fiction is that it presents us with narrators – Talbot in *Rites of Passage*, Lok in *The Inheritors* – whose limited viewpoint we have to see beyond if we are to grasp the significance of what is unfolding. But Barclay is limited in another, more fundamental sense: cruel, solipsistic, vain, tedious, cowardly, unfunny, indifferent even to those closest to him (like his dying wife and grieving daughter), he is one of the least appealing of all Golding's characters. Much of the novel's uneasiness stems from the suspicion that Golding not only does not disapprove of Barclay but regards him with the greatest affection. With his "scraggy yellow-white beard, yellow-white thatch and broken-toothed grin", he bears some physical resemblance to his creator. They share similar enthusiasms, Barclay being "something of a church fancier", for example, and an inveterate traveller. His novelistic career has followed an equivalent course: a remarkable "one off" success with a suitably nautical-sounding first novel, *Coldharbour*; another book written (like *Rites of Passage*) in "next to no time"; another still, *The Endless Plain*, troublingly dependent on the central idea of a "hopelessly bad" manuscript sent to him by a man called Prescott ("Of course it was properly treated and all that, but still . . . Had I remembered? Was it wholly the work of the unconscious . . . or had I stolen the idea deliberately at some point?"). Most important of all, though, Barclay gives voice to anti-academic prejudices that can be found in the work of his inventor. In his essay "A Moving Target", for example, Golding reflects on the drawbacks of serving as "the raw material of academic light industry"; this too is the burden of Barclay – he is "Rick's special subject . . . his raw material, the ore in his mine, his farm, his lobster pots". When Golding in that same essay cites the case of the female postgraduate student who wrote to him "looking for a subject for her thesis", it is hard not to see the outlines of the Barclay-Tucker relationship:

She was not going to write a thesis on anything as dull as a dead man. She wanted fresh blood. She was the going out with her critical shotgun to bring home the living. She proposed I should bare my soul, answer all her questions, do all the work, and she would write the thesis on me. But years first of reading these on me and then more years of not reading these on me have made me more elusive than a professor . . . I am a moving target.

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it ends with the moving target brought to a standstill as the relentless badger gets his man. And at this level one is forced to suspect that Golding is at worst merely out to get his man, merely settling scores with his interpreters. There are no Rick L. Tuckers in my Golding bibliography, but I might well find the name too close for comfort if I were a scholar like James R. Baker, who has been interpreting and casebooking Golding since 1964, and whose 1981 interview with him contains exchanges such as this:

Baker: But again, that persistent theme in your work – the fall from innocence, or the loss of innocence. *Golding:* Well, it's quite a big theme, isn't it? It's rather like saying here's a novelist who writes about people.

Or, at best, Golding is earning himself a place at the butt-end of a literary tradition in which scholars are portrayed as forces of death, and American scholars as the most deadly of all. A notable example of this genre is Philip Larkin's poem "Posterity", to which *The Paper Men* bears surprising resemblances: both Golding's Tucker and Larkin's Jake Balokowsky have saddled themselves with English "old-type natural fouled-up guys" who don't welcome their attentions; both are under pressure from others to complete their research; both would rather be working on something else (Balokowsky on "Protest Theater", Tucker "phonetics"), were there any "future" in it. But to make the comparison is to recognize how much funnier, more economical and more incisive as satire the Larkin poem is, how much more credible the hard-bitten Balokowsky than the fawning Tucker with his talk of "the Great Pageant of English Literature". So much, indeed, does Larkin's poem both haunt and overshadow *The Paper Men* that there are two extraordinary moments in the text (pp 79 and 113) where Golding refers to Tucker not as "Rick" but as "Jake", as if so in debt to Larkin as to have slipped into his idiom, or as if, more plausibly, he had used the name Jake in an earlier draft, thought the better of it but neglected to strike out these two instances. Either way, the effect is to remind one how grumpy and derivative, even to an English ear, Golding's anti-academicism sounds; in America it will sound crustier and more philistine still.

It would be a very peculiar Golding novel, however, that allowed itself to operate only on one level. When Barclay and Tucker climb through the Swiss fog they hear a stream with "two voices", one a "cheerful babble, a kind of frivolity", the other "a deep meditative hum". This is an apt metaphor for a body of fiction which, even at its most social and babbling (in *The Pyramid*, for example, or the first half of *Rites of Passage*), has deeper levels of suggestion. *The Paper Men* babbles with anti-academicism, and indeed with psychobabble (it threatens at moments to become a "dipso-schizo" case history), so that we may miss its allegorical subtext. But with the introduction of Barclay's mysterious sponsor Halliday this "hum" grows more audible. Halliday, it seems, is "the power behind the whole operation", "brooding over all", and Barclay slowly grasps that Tucker is merely an appointed representative who has been given "seven years" to complete his work and who (we learn) has sacrificed his wife to Halliday in order to appease him. Barclay endeavours to find out about Halliday but when he turns to the relevant page of *Who's Who in America* it is "bare, bare, bare, just blank white paper"; immediately afterwards, he looks across at a church and "my God he was standing at the top". Once this thread of religious metaphor is noticed even the liberally sprinkled expletives – *For God's sake, My God, God knows, Christ, How the hell, Well, I'm damned* – begin to look carefully planted, and some snatches of dialogue acquire faintly absurd metaphysical overtones:

You don't know who I am. Nobody knows who I am. No, no. Of course not . . . Halliday now, he knows. No one else.

At some point or other you can introduce me to Halliday.

That's real difficult.

Not a deep meditative hum, perhaps, but an indication that something other than satire and psychoanalysis is going on – at the very least a playful mythic rumble. Early in the novel we see Barclay ridiculing the religious conversation of his Italian "chum" (mistress): "My driving force was a passionate need for there *not* to be

a miracle". Later, in the novel's most highly-charged episode, he himself undergoes a conversion when, in the middle of a Sicilian earthquake (the ground shaking in rhythm to his own DTs) he enters a cathedral and discovers "in one destroying instant that all my adult life I had believed in God and this knowledge was a vision of God". He sees himself as one of the "predestinate damned" ("I. am. sin.") and loses his shell of scepticism: "It's all in the mind" (a Barclayan – or Berkeleian – denial of matter). Golding, it seems, has embedded in his novel two "theologically witty" possibilities: one, that Halliday is God, Barclay a sinner ("Old Filthy Rags") wandering in the desert, and Tucker the Christ-figure who offers him redemption and the promise of a Life hereafter; the other that Tucker is Satan ("Rick, you lucky young devil"). "How the devil did Rick Tucker . . ." whose temptations Barclay must refuse. Certainly Tucker, with his "stink" of deodorant and bestial physique (there is much emphasis on his hairiness, and he appears in the guise of badger, dog and shire horse) has more than a whiff of Mephistopheles. What he proposes to Barclay is in effect a Faustian pact, whereby Barclay will enjoy the earthly delights of Mary Lou (repeatedly pictured as Helen of Troy) in exchange for his Life: little wonder that Barclay should invoke Marlowe's "why this is hell, nor am I out of it", imagine that Tucker is pursuing him in a hearse, or be deluded by the end that he is himself a sort of Christ, with four stigmata/pains in his hands and feet, and a fifth wound in his side which he acquires (we presume) in the last sentence.

Since Golding invokes the spirit of "farce" and "low comedy" (as he did in *Rites of Passage*) and implies that Barclay's "autobiography" is merely "a theologically witty piece of clowning" ("Please see the joke"), it would be solemn and Tuckerish to take such readings any further. But even if one judges the theological overtones to be merely playful, one effect of them is to make us re-evaluate the relationship between Barclay and Tucker, which begins to look more balanced in its sympathies, less an endorsement of Barclay as *alter ego*, than a first reading might suggest. Several of Golding's novels, it is often remarked, have a late shift of viewpoint by means of which all that has preceded is seen in a new light: the arrival of the rescue-parties in *Lord of the Flies* and *Pincher Martin*, Colley's letter in *Rites of Passage*. There is nothing quite like that in *The Paper Men*, which remains within the confines of a

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pp 111-115 of

Schooling the head

J. K. L. Walker

STANLEY MIDDLETON
The Daysman
208pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
009 1548500

Fate, seen as arbitrary and uncontrollable, furnishes a sombre background to *The Daysman*, Stanley Middleton's new novel; against it the well-meaning attempts of John Richardson, a successful comprehensive school headmaster, to judge and mediate in the affairs of pupils, colleagues and friends appear decreasingly relevant. "Life's not only inexplicable, it's ungovernable", reflects Joanna, Richardson's normally brisk and sardonic wife, after a multiple drowning involving children from the school. "We're not in control of our lives". This sentiment is echoed by Felicity Brooks, whose daughter Veronica has committed suicide: "We enjoy this or that for a short time, and then something else blows up, something bad and black."

Much blows up during the course of the novel to ruffle the calm waters of the Richardsons' domesticity: the boating accident; the breaking marriage of a junior chemistry master, Anthony Moore, who with unattractive dispatch turns for consolation to a young domestic science teacher, near-replica of Moore's departed wife Sandra - "crippled in moral sense", her features "pretty, forgettable, useless, vulgar, to be despised"; the Miller parents who complain about their daughter's friendship with a black pupil; cheating in A-level examinations. Richardson brings to these professional vexations a matching professional calm and headmasterly authority, reserving private doubts about role and motivation for the often tart scrutiny of his wife, socially a cut or two above him and thus, it is implied, no respecter of feelings. Joanna's scepticism about general demand for the ministrations of rationality still permits her to encourage Richardson's efforts to help the drop-out daughter of a neighbour edge her way back towards a university place and then, after the girl's apparently irrational suicide, to offer practical and moral support to the family.

As a foil to these troubled events, Middleton

On the rural road

David Profumo

DAVID COOK
Sunrising
248pp. The Alison Press/Secker and Warburg.
£8.50.
0436 106744

A particular hazard of novels loosely classified as "picaresque" is their tendency towards bitterness. Unless skilfully handled, the narrative shape of the journey remains fragmentary, episodes giving way to each other episodically, the book ending up as less than the sum of its parts. This is rather the effect of reading the first three parts of David Cook's new novel, set "on the road" in rural England in 1830. A teenage couple, roaming from the Midlands are accidentally involved in the burning of a hayfield. John is tried unfairly for arson - there have been similar incidents in protest against unemployment caused by agricultural mechanization - and is hanged on a Warwickshire hill called Sunrising. Cath is pregnant; certain parties, led by one Bevil Blizard, want to manipulate the incident politically, and enlist her help as an agent provocateur rallying support for the oppressed inhabitants of Otmoor. This involves a series of adventures during which she is arrested, takes up with circus folk, lives in the woods, has a stillborn boy, and eventually heads for London.

The idea, of course, is that Miss Cath the innocent stumbles into a web of exploitation she cannot understand, but since she remains a cipher throughout, some readers may not be too concerned about not understanding it either. To make matters worse this female Oliver Twist acquires en route two cute little knights-errant, devoted James (thirteen) and vulnerable Betty William (eleven), and the

offers a picture of Richardson's own family life which glows like that of some minor master of Victorian domestic genre: the three girls, Marguerite, Virginia and Fay, dancing in the rain during the family holiday in Brittany; homework in front of the television set; the washing-up roster; parental love, pride and anxiety. The element of "implacable domesticity" in Middleton's novels has been noted elsewhere, and it may seem unfeeling to cavil at what could more kindly be viewed as a steady affirmation of the centrality of family life in English society and the attempt to incorporate it into fiction.

Yet the shift of tone towards indulgent, almost cloying harmonies - especially in the conversations between parents and children - is at odds with Middleton's dry but carefully calculated understatement elsewhere; a description, for example, of Richardson's battle to have defective heating at the school repaired squeezes a day's exasperation into a laconic paragraph or two. Domesticity in *The Daysman*, however, is manipulated towards an ironic outcome. Richardson, by now moving towards national celebrity as the author of a book on the aims of comprehensive education and television chat-show guest, endures a vitriolic baragoule from Felicity Brooks. Her loss finally bursts forth in a half-demented attack on his family and on Richardson himself for presuming to mediate. Shaken, he hurries home to the confidence-restoring warmth of wife and children.

Middleton's generally rather lack-lustre narrative style and apparent scorn for the good life of fiction (characterization and setting verge on the perfunctory) seem perversely designed to keep his readers' attention fixed unblinkingly on the matter in hand: here, the complexities of apparently humdrum decisions and the pitfalls that await the *bien pensant*. The archaic "daysman" of the title (meaning arbitrator) arouses, too, Old Testament echoes of the Prophet Job railing against God's manifold injustices and of his own lack of status that precludes discussion as between equals. "Nor is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both", complains the prophet. The task would no doubt have been a thankless one, given the nature of plaintiff and Defendant; a conclusion that Middleton appears to bear out.

wonder of it is that this intrepid trio remains unshakably innocent despite continuous exposure to the viciousness of Victorian society. There are, to be fair, some evocative set-pieces along the way (the lair of Darkie Kimber the witch, a Ranter's meeting, St Giles's Fair) but on the whole the narrative subsoil is crumbly, the sprawling result of Cook having thrown together too many diverting incidents and too much authentic detail - how people snared birds, held trials, made brooms, had babies.

Things firm up, however, when they reach London and start to seek their fortunes. Eventually they fall foul of various predatory characters who deal in children as carnal livestock, and the description of their underworld experience is convincingly sinister. Cook's prose falls upon the murkiness of this new environment - all peacery and pederasty - with enthusiasm. Underlying the patchiness of *Sunrising* seems to be the perfectly valid point that the routine of social injustice can never be broken without the struggles of a few brave individuals. Two aspects of the book, though, prevent this from coming over with any subtlety, and both are surprising from the author of *Walter* and its equally moving sequel *Winter Doves*. First, there is a histrionic touch, both in verbal mannerism and in narrative contrivance, as when, for example, a crazed, vagrant tries to violate Cath while his pet wildcat miscarries in a nearby shed, thereafter savaging him to death. Secondly, a sentimental strain curdles the novel, from the scene of the hanging, when neck-jerker becomes tear-jerker ("His eyes fixed on hers, full of puzzlement and wonder and fear...") to the finale ("She had the character of a good person; this was the only essential"). So, unrealistic are these virtuous lambs to the slaughter, one is tempted to wish a few more of them had actually got there.

Hearts of Oak

Toby Fitton

HUGH THOMAS
Havannah
263pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0241 111757

G. M. Young held that the historian should read so deeply in the sources of his chosen period as to be able to hear the people talking. In this novel, by a prominent writer on Spain and its empire, the sources have been handled with such professional accomplishment that one cannot help hearing the historian speaking - and not just in the footnotes.

Detail is skilfully used, though sometimes it is over-used. Background is essential in historical fiction; here it is occasionally obtrusive. An evocation of eighteenth-century mercantile Liverpool was necessary, but here the account is not merely evocative but precise and statistical. One gets a Pevsnerian tour of buildings, and, when public affairs are mentioned, a whiff of Namierism on the fictional air. It is pleasing that General Reid the flautist should be brought in, and also Madame de Tascher, whose daughter Josephine was told by a Marquis fortune-teller that one day she would be "more than a Queen". Only occasionally do these little touches, which usually make for verisimilitude, give rise to doubts: a coppersmith makes green vitriol for tanning, and not copper; and would John Newton really have used the expression "koh-i-noor" in the 1760s?

The story has a rich old Liverpool merchant looking back to his youth, when he found himself confidential clerk to the commissary of the fleet that was preparing to take Havannah during the Seven Years' War. The genre usually demands a slight suspension of disbelief, and it is therefore not implausible that the seastroke-lad's connection with a prosperous operator working in London to equip the navy should have got him an entrée to White's and Lloyd's coffee-houses, where Horace Walpole is the most eminent of several eminences whose conversation is reported. Nor indeed does it stretch the imagination too far that the boy should have been admitted with his master to the Admiralty Board Room, to be privy to much high strategic discussion. A host of senior military and naval officers (perhaps too many for the needs of the story) are present, fully described. Their presence, in fact, is overpowering; the lifeless narrator, in relation to the great events and personalities he has been so fortuitously - and profitably - thrust amongst, is of little consequence. Of the lesser figures encountered on the naval expedition it is Dominic Serres, the marine painter, who comes to life more than the hero himself.

So, with a background of Hearts of Oak, white flux, black vomit, yellow-jack and Rube Britannia, the story of the Cuban siege is recounted, the sordid medical aspects of life among the disease-ridden force not being neglected in the naval glory of it all. At one time the narrator and his friend Serres find themselves in the city of Havannah itself, rescued from captivity by a cloak-and-dagger job which seems to come from a contemporary opera.

Narratives of battle, siege and victory are punctuated by groups of documents, the hero having conveniently been made temporary scribe to the naval commanders whose battle reports he took down: at times the book looks like a Navy Records Society volume. The navy records turn into *Havannah*, even with a division list - for the final chapter, where the debates on the peace negotiations of 1763 (which saw the exchange of Cuba for Florida) are covered with a wealth of circumstantial detail.

The Spanish island was given up for a great tract of swampy mainland, though not before some quick money had been made by Liverpool merchants with an eye on the main chance; the hero invests his portion of the commissary's profits in a share of a slave ship, and lives peacefully and prosperously ever after. His tale has been told with precision by an enterprising historian taking a busman's holiday.

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The internalizing mind

Jennifer Hornsby

JOHN R. SEARLE
Intentionality: An essay in the philosophy of mind
278pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.
0521 228956

John Searle's writings on the philosophy of language during the 1960s and 1970s placed a salutary emphasis on an obvious point - that acts of speech are acts, and thus the products of states of mind. It followed that the philosophy of language was a branch of the philosophy of mind. In *Intentionality*, Professor Searle endorses a particular conception of the place of a study of language within a study of the mind. This conception goes beyond anything that follows from the obvious point, and it leads Searle to attempt a general theory of intentional phenomena.

By "Intentionality", as it occurs in his title and (with the capital "I") in his book, Searle means the property of certain states of mind in virtue of which they are directed towards objects or states of affairs in the world. He thinks that, since linguistic acts and the relevant mental states are alike in representing the world, and since the idea of representation is, in the case of linguistic acts, an intuitive one, it must be possible to arrive at a gratifyingly mysterious view of intentional mental states by exploiting analogies between these and linguistic acts. This is not to say, however, that an account of the Intentionality of mental things can be founded on our account of the representational properties of linguistic things. In Searle's view, the Intentionality of mental states is intrinsic to them, and the representational character of bits of speech is derived. First mind, then language.

Is there not a problem here? If we use Searle's analogies to cast light on the mind

time take Searle's view of the priorities, then we seem to be left with the question of what it is for there to be intentional mental phenomena in the first place. While Searle attacks a problem of meaning - a problem about how the mind imposes itself on sounds and marks - his reader may worry about a prior problem of Intentionality. How can the mind's properties ever have imposed themselves on anything? How can a world of "merely physical" objects (as some philosophers will call the objects we find in the world) contain things possessed intrinsically of representational properties?

For his part, Searle thinks that there is no real problem. He tells us that Intentionality is a natural biological phenomenon, and that intentional states are realized in the neurophysiology of the brain (as a linguistic act is realized in one or another medium). So he thinks a logical account of the properties of intentional states must provide all the answers there can be, or need to be, to all the good philosophical questions there are, or can be, about their nature. The basis for an exhaustive account of the logical properties of a particular intentional state is supplied when we say what its mode is (is it *believing* or *fearing* or *intending* or ...?), and what its content is.

"Content" is Searle's and other philosophers' term for what is specified by a "that"-clause in the ascription of a mental state. The content of (say) the belief that I ascribe when I state "He believes that Jones is hostile", is, then, on the face of it, that Jones is hostile. But there is room to think that specifications of contents given in ordinary, everyday ascriptions of mental states are not in fact accurate specifications; it might be that ordinary reports of people's beliefs, or hopes, or fears do not sufficiently reflect what their minds, as properly conceived, contain. This what Searle thinks about a great many mental states, including those which he regards as biologically primitive, namely perception and intention.

An intermediate introduction

Colin McGinn

SIMON BLACKBURN
Spreading the Word
379pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £16
(paperback £6.95).
0198246501

There are two views about the place of the philosophy of language. One is that this part of philosophy enjoys a special authority: since language is what expresses our concepts and represents the world, its study should provide the key to understanding both the mind's powers and the constitution of reality. The other is that it is merely one department of philosophy, raising its own special problems and requiring its own distinctive methods, and that we should not expect to make substantial progress elsewhere in philosophy by restricting our attention to how we speak. The truth probably lies somewhere between these two extreme views. Certainly we can reasonably hope to shed some light on our concepts and the reality to which they apply by focusing upon the meanings of words and the workings of language; but equally our conception of linguistic meaning is likely to turn upon broader questions of metaphysics, epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

Simon Blackburn in effect takes the intermediate view in this introduction. He believes that it is fruitful to approach philosophical questions through a consideration of language, but he wisely resists the urge to make the philosophy of language autonomous: in particular, he pours cold water over projects and programmes which would wish to displace or undercut traditional philosophical enquiry by delivering supposed formal (and informal) "results" in scientific semantic theory. He accordingly offers us a mixture of quasi-technical "material" and discursive philosophizing, ranging from Tarskian formal semantics to the metaphysics of moral value.

Blackburn's selection of topics will not please everyone. On the one hand, there will be complaints about what he has excluded: aside from Davidsonian formal semantics,

there is little on the kinds of systematic semantics upon which philosophers and linguists have recently and fruitfully collaborated - model-theoretic semantics, conceptual role or probabilistic semantics, game-theoretic semantics, translational semantics, etc. Nor is much space given over to specific semantic problems raised by particular constructions of natural language: indirect discourse, adverbs, proper names, mass terms, pronouns, quantifiers, etc. These omissions are regrettable because such topics constitute the backbone of a typical course in the philosophy of language, and there is still no text which presents them all (or even a good selection of them) in a clear accessible form. On the other hand, what Blackburn has chosen to include fits only loosely within the province of the philosophy of language: there is a good deal of epistemology, metaphysics and moral theory in the book which is at best orthogonal to the study of language proper. In fact, I suspect that Blackburn has included pretty much whatever interests him, without worrying whether the topic falls strictly within the bounds of his title.

But what of the book Blackburn has written? It has many virtues: it is clear, readable, unpretentious, pertinent and sober. These virtues are, I think, particularly beneficial in the chapters on Wittgenstein and on reference. The book's vices are those of its virtues: at times it is a trifle too earnest and unstimulating, the homely touches can be irritating (a major approach to meaning is dubbed "dog-legged" for reasons that "never became clear to me"), and for stretches it is uninterestingly negative. Some of these faults are no doubt due to a commendable desire to combat doctrines Blackburn regards as pernicious; but I think their prevalence and durability is rather more limited than appears from his Oxford vantage-point. Correcting uninteresting errors is apt to be as uninteresting as the errors themselves. On the whole, however, the book is an ably executed and useful introduction to a range of worthwhile topics; it should put (some of) the philosophy of language within the reach of those scared off by its technicalities and occasional obscurity.

According to Searle, if I see a yellow station wagon, then I have a visual experience whose content is (in Searle's words) *that there is a yellow station wagon there and that there is a yellow station wagon there is causing this visual experience*. Again, if I intentionally raise my arm, then I have an intention whose content must be specified like this: *that my arm goes up as a result of this intention in action*. (Searle allows that there are intentional states whose content is not propositional - cannot be given in a "that"-clause; but for some reason he insists that all states of perceiving and intending have propositional contents.)

Searle's arguments for such content-specifications of these, which diverge considerably from those of everyday ascriptions, apparently rely on a general constraint he imposes on the notion of content. This is that the fulfilment of the content of a state of perceiving (or intending) must amount to a person's veridically perceiving something (or intentionally doing something). But Searle never makes it fully clear why this constraint should be accepted. Why should not an account of the mode of a psychological state combine with an account of its content as more normally specified to enable us to give the conditions for the state itself's being fulfilled? Can we not say that *what I intend* (the content of my intention) is simply that I raise my arm, and that if that is what I intend (if the mode is intending), then what is required for the success of the state is that it results in my arm's going up?

Even if Searle's arguments do not convince at this point, he makes it clear enough what the merit of such content specifications as he gives is supposed to be. He thinks they make possible an *internalist* account of Intentionality.

It is a consequence of Searle's version of naturalism that everything animal creatures employ in representing the world must be internal to them - inside their brains. Searle must, then, provide an account of content compatible with the view that a person's being in a

mental state is simply a matter of that person's brain's being a certain way; and he must take issue with those philosophers who have argued that factors external to a person may make the difference to what mental state that person is in. A feature of the content specifications I have quoted from Searle, a feature which recurs elsewhere, is crucial here. This is the feature of self-referentiality. A self-referential state "indicates" (as he puts it) relations in which a part of its conditions of satisfaction must stand to the state itself for its full conditions of satisfaction to be met. And Searle thinks that self-referential states can determine one object in the world rather than another by way of "contextual" elements (by which they refer to themselves) which are fully internalized (which are elements of those very internal states).

Whether self-referentiality can pull off this trick depends on what exactly was supposed to have made trouble for the internalist. If we were impressed, for instance, by the general problem about Intentionality which I mentioned near the start, then we might take the internalist to be in trouble because we found a difficulty in seeing how something that was in the brain could attach to some one particular object rather than some other. In that case, we should now be puzzled how something in the brain can possibly refer to itself when it is itself attached to some one particular object.

There is a great deal more in this provocative book. Searle locates intentional states within a Network, and against a Background of non-intentional states. In the course of expounding his general theory of their nature, he is led to give his own accounts of perception, action, causation, conventional linguistic meaning, indexicals and proper names. Searle thinks of himself as swimming against the current; and much of his argument is negative. Nevertheless the gist is everywhere positive: his book is full of novel suggestions in familiar areas, and all the commitments are clearly spelled out.

Aside from expositions of the views of others (Grice, Davidson, Dummett, Evans, Wittgenstein *et al*), Blackburn puts forward some ideas of his own, notably a "projectivist" account of moral value: the Humean view that our ascription of value to external states of affairs is really a foisting on to the world of what are but creatures of our own emotions and attitudes. I think that Blackburn's attachment to this doctrine outruns his reasons for believing it. As he recognizes, we speak and think as if projectivism were not true; and there is nothing in the moral concepts themselves (nor in any scientific discovery) which encourages the projectivist interpretation (so the case is unlike that of secondary qualities such as colour). Blackburn's attempts to motivate the doctrine strike me as unconvincing: aside from a rather inconclusive argument about the nature of the dependence (supervenience) of the moral on the natural, which hinges upon a dubious conception of this type of dependence, the only real reason produced is that the projectivist view is more "economical" than the objectivist alternative. Blackburn's idea here is that we do not need to postulate objective values in order to explain why we make the moral judgments we do.

I doubt that this can capture what prompts moral projectivism, since (as Blackburn himself notes) the same kind of point seems to lead to projectivism about (*inter alia*) mathematics, modality and causation; but isn't there supposed to be something peculiarly problematic about mind-independent values? Secondly, the blade Blackburn wields can be self-mutilating unless handled with care: for might we not explain our holding beliefs about the material world or about other minds by invoking only facts about our perceptual experiences or about the behaviour of others? If what is real and objective is what minimally explains why we hold what we do, then the way is open for projectivism about material objects and other minds. What is needed to block this kind of overkill is some reasoned choice of the ultimately explanatory facts (as it might be, physical facts), or else Occam's razor will not slice up the world as Blackburn would like to see it sliced. But once such a choice has been made it will require substantial work to prevent the moral objectivist from pressing his claims: if we have in any case to acknowledge more facts than are strictly necessary to explain why we think as we do, then why not count moral values as among the more?

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The battle of the books

Lorna Sage

More people in Great Britain will buy novels this year than last, thanks to Booker McConnell, thanks to television, and thanks particularly to the Book Marketing Council's latest and largest promotion, "Best Novels of Our Time". That they may end up buying more copies of fewer novels is an ungrateful thought, and perhaps it won't happen. The Marketing people's shopping list is ominously televisual, but Booker books have to be new-ish, and so still have a chance of being read before they're screened. And anyway, Book Marketing and Booker are for the moment selling different versions of serious reading: Booker being "Commonwealth", concerned and centrifugal, while Marketing is the same thing turned inside out - inward-looking, English, nostalgic and self-dramatizing. Thanks, largely, to Marketing, a lot of people who never buy serious fiction will be ambushed by it in unexpected places - Boots, Menzies, W. H. Smith - and so, it's hoped, develop a taste for more, as well as mopping up the short-fall in the school textbook market. Sceptics, it's suggested, are probably people who read books "anyway", and so know nothing about it. On the other hand "criticism" is OK so long as it's "controversial" and makes news. As Desmond Clarke, the ex-director of Marketing, picturesquely put it, the spectacle of "aerial battles among literati squirting venom at each other" is, properly understood, a side-show in the (sales) campaign.

Marketing time is different from ordinary days and weeks: Mr Clarke liked to talk of stimulating latent interest, and consumer penetration being very slow; Anthony Burgess, on the other hand, has compiled (and Allison and Busby have published) his "rival" reading list, *Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English Since 1939* since last November, to coincide with the campaign's climax. Battle rages: *Take a Girl Like You* v *Lucky Jim*, *Lord of the Flies* v *The Spire*. Soon, latent readers picking up their tranquillizers will stagger out of Boots with *A Dance to the Music of Time* as well. There's something odd about the topography involved too: the recycled novels represent the culture of a strange new empire which Burgess aptly titles "Anglophonia", the English-speaking world on which the sun never sets. His own comments on some of his chosen ninety-nine may help map out the ground - "160 brief pages sum up the South African disease"; "This book sums up much of what modern India is about"; "a great universal drama which is set, almost as though by accident, in a New South Wales locale". Robertson

Davies - whose *The Rebel Angels* is "a wise, profound and joyful book, Canadian in its feeling of Commonwealth membership, which means that it accepts its European heritage" - is tipped for the Nobel Prize. Burgess's only real point of difference with the Book Marketing Council's panel (Sir Peter Parker, Elizabeth Jane Howard, Richard Hoggart) is that more of his writers come from the farther regions of Anglophonia. Anglophonese is what they write, the summary language. Richard Hoggart too, confessed to his own modest voyages of discovery: a world of women - "books my wife had read and I hadn't had time to until now" - and America - "another literature in our language".

So what we have is a ghostly empire of books, "products of a more or less common culture" (Burgess). I doubt that this is at all seriously true: it seems, rather, an illusion bred in the heady atmosphere of Anglophonia out of a confusion between language and culture, past and present. Not that it's impossible to imagine a reading list that would look more plausible. Indeed, Malcolm Bradbury cunningly scooped Marketing's panel by producing one on the eve of their announcement, but to do so he had to levitate into academe (a much more honestly unreal place) and choose some of those British writers with strong imaginative connections elsewhere (Malcolm Lowry, Doris Lessing, Angus Wilson), two of whom (Lessing, Wilson) were, one reminds oneself, quietly excluded from Marketing's earlier "Best of British" promotion by Mr Clarke on the mysterious grounds that they (along with Muriel Spark) "were not promotable". An action, you might say, that sums up much of what modern Britain is about, though set, almost as though by accident, in a Marketing locale. We don't need to re-colonize India, South Africa or Canada to discover cultural divisions in "our" language, witness Burgess on Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*: "the most massive statement made, up to that time, on the position of woman in the modern world... ought to be taken as an historical document of some importance". Novels not set in our own middle ground strike us as mainly of documentary interest. Again, time zones, one notes, are different too. Hence perhaps some of the bafflement of *Sunday Times* readers when urged by literary editor Claire Tomalin to take issue with Sir Peter Parker, Elizabeth Jane Howard and Richard Hoggart. Though they complained quotably about "three people of one generation, one type of mind, one type of calling", and accused the list of being parochial, sexist and so on, they couldn't, unsurprisingly, muster an alternative consensus.

The "controversy", such as it is, is really a

kind of plea for proportional representation. Burgess refers inspiringly to "dialectic", but the level on which he's obviously provocative - he omits Beckett from his ninety-nine and makes Erica Jong the only woman novelist of the last sixteen years - doesn't promise a very sophisticated debate. He's merely heating the bounds of his territory: Beckett is dangerously abstract (and moreover chose French), Jong joined the real world when she made so much money, and found love. How do we stage the arguments about what's worth arguing about? Not only do we tell ourselves different stories, we've been doing it for years. For instance, how account for the absence from "everybody's" list of J. G. Farrell, with his genius for recreating history-as-farce, the (imaginative) end of empire? Clearly, from my point of view, a rhetorical question, but that's just my story. The particular and fascinating embarrassment of Anglophonia (because of the language/literature clash over "English") is that it exposes the collusion between stories and histories. Marketing's panel were registering this in a different way when they chose no less than three *romans fleuves* (though there's probably also another attraction in these serial shapes, to do with length as an unpretentious, dilute form of "universality").

A look at one of marketing's more routine, domestic forms - reviewing - helps explain how our different stories multiply and co-exist without our being fully aware of it. The book pages compartmentalize clashing assumptions and values automatically - not, as is sometimes said, because of going for "positive" reviews, but because of avoiding anti-reviews or un-reviews. In this genre, the opposite of positive is not negative (hatchet-jobs are on the side of life) but blank: the uncomprehending, alienated, can't-see-what-all-the-fuss-is-about response which breaks the basic rules of the game. That this horror is almost always avoided is partly due to reviewers' pride in their agility, what you might call the athletics of reception - "I laughed out loud four or five times and thumped the table twice (high score)" (Michael Ratcliffe on Updike's *Beck's Back in the Times*). More important still, though, is the literary editor's skill in matching up reviewers and reviewees. Thus one simple-minded explanation of Burgess's blankness on women novelists is that he doesn't review them often, presumably because it's sufficiently obvious that he wouldn't do them justice, and that they wouldn't, week after week, provide enough inspiration for active dislike. By the same token, I don't find myself reviewing (say) Kingsley Amis, Graham Greene, Paul Theroux... The boundary lines can be very finely drawn: Donleavy yes, Tom Sharpe no. Gra-

dually one gets a sense of one's curious profile. In my case there's a blank I think of as "boys' books" (I shall never be asked to review Simon Raven again) and a "positive" area populated by - for instance - Barth, Hawkes, Brautigan. Plus of course (the obvious match) women novelists. The literary pages are thus splendidly "plural", while the reviewers are (progressively?) less so. Only first novels run the gauntlet; most of the others get a reception committee.

It's unsurprising, then, that attempts at consensus go wrong, and that we're not good at "debate" on home ground, let alone in Anglophonia. People often mutter "compromise" at Booker judges, who often look shifty even when it's not true, because the whole occasion is in some sense compromised. The air of unease, enhanced by the betting at Ladbrokes and the TV dinner at Stationers' Hall, is thoroughly appropriate. To outsiders, the earnest ex-imperial pageantry (Booker's catchment area is Anglophonia minus the United States) must look very odd. When I did my stint as a judge (1982) the guest of honour was Italo Calvino, who wrote up the occasion when he got home as a sort of ritual of reassurance and exclusion. Chairman John Carey's careful multi-purpose summing-up speech especially - all about the modest virtues of continuity, realism and scepticism - struck him as "characteristic". At the time I recall him asking, persistently, *sotto voce*, "Why am I here?" It seemed a good question. Particularly since, by a piece of splendid mismanagement, the high table seating plan had shunted Signora Calvino - who, like lots of Italians, has Argentinian connections - next to another guest of honour who happened to be a Falklands admiral.

The embarrassments when world pictures collide like this seem to me a fair guide to the actual discontinuities and differences we live with. Marketing is packaging a past, indeed making reading itself seem a *reminiscent* act, in collusion of course with television, which is so expert at those "costume" dramatizations that make (say) the 1940s look lushly, eternally habitable (and make "British" culture exportable, too). The only recent Marketing promotion that entirely failed was Science Fiction. The future has flopped already, so we're left with remembrance of things past. Anthony Burgess, praising Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* ("the most important post-war novel on the condition of the black man in an intolerant white society"), says also: "What we all need is the glory of diversity". He's surely exactly right. The difficulty is that once you start thinking about what "we all need", diversity dissolves into the language of sameness.

Jonathan Raban on Stevenson's *Amateur Emigrant*, Stephen Pile on E. F. Benson.

The resulting mix is illustrated by, for example, the first cluster of biographies and memoirs, Robert McAlmon's and Kay Boyle's *Being Geniuses Together*; W. N. P. Barbel Jackson Bate's *Samuel Johnson* and Heathcliff Pearson's hilarious, unconventional *The Smith of Smiths*. All this seems very much in tune with the original Hogarth style of publishing, which applied stringent critical standards while taking direction from definite individual tastes, even accommodating clashes of personal judgment, rather than dredging a well-fished pool of talent.

I think the Hogarth echoes are also picked up in a more complex, unstated way. Reprinting is, after all, an affirmation of value and the choice of a particular cultural past. Where the inter-war Hogarth and the new Virago influences merge is, perhaps, in a refusal to be bludgeoned by an accepted view of that past, a hint that forgotten books may point to the weakness in our memories rather than in the authors. This is the real unifying principle of the new Hogarth: there is not an author there who is not on the attack - with humour, or with scholarship, or with poetic insight, and nearly always with cutting wit - against a docile agreement with accepted views.

Letters

'Eleni'

Sir, - Fay Zika misses my point. No historian with any claim, however slight, to "historical fair-mindedness and scholarship" would maintain for one moment such a proposition as that "the pre-1974 'rewriting' of the civil war is the correct one"; nor did I do so. The writing of history is not a matter of arguing one ideological position against another, though both Fay Zika and Marion Saraphis (a name with honourable ELAS associations) appear to assume such an attitude in their letters (February 10).

What I was objecting to was something very different: the deliberate and systematic falsification of historical evidence by anyone, the practice of rewriting the past not by way of legitimate reinterpretation, but as an exercise in dumping awkward truths down what Orwell called the "memory hole" and replacing them with fictional propaganda. The end justifies the means, and objective truth is a bourgeois (if at times inconvenient) illusion. Communist ideologists do not have a monopoly of this aberration - the Greek right, too, can show some pretty glaring instances of it - but it is they who, in Housman's words, "formulate the rule without misgiving and practise it with conscious pride".

I did not refer to (some) Communist guerrillas as sadists and killers because they were Communists, but because they were, in point of fact, sadists and killers, and this unwelcome truth is being politely buried for sectarian ends. Perhaps I should have balanced the picture with some references to that disgusting and de-ranked character George Grivas, whose post-war embracement of *enosis* was hardly enough to atone for his atrocities, though many Greeks at the time of the Cyprus crisis seemed to think so. The line between honest interpretation and ideological propaganda may at times be narrow, but a book like C. M. Woodhouse's *The Struggle for Greece 1941-1949* is there to remind us that a historian's business is to search out truth as best he can, without fear or favour.

Marion Saraphis's letter takes a more or less straight KKE line over the development of the civil war. The historians who, for obvious reasons, reject the concept of the 1943-49 continuum, with its "three rounds" of unsuccessful struggle to take over Greece, are, almost without exception, Marxists. This is not the place to debate how far their version of events has availed itself discreetly of the "memory hole". However, to attribute all the blame for the "horrors brought on Greece", local atrocities included, to "foreign intervention" (a handy, if overworked, scapegoat these days), while at the same time chiding Britain for not making the Greek right behave after the Varkiza Agreement of February 1945, makes me suspect that Mrs Saraphis may be pulling our legs; and if she really believes that at this point Greece was a British protectorate she goes straight into the select category headed by Lewis Carroll's White Queen, who was quite happy to swallow six impossibilities before breakfast.

The insinuation that because of his wartime support for Zervas, Woodhouse cannot be trusted in his account of the Greek left is a *comat* that can safely be left to find its own level. Zervas had his faults; but he did not go in for organized atrocities, and he was, with the possible exception of Aris Velouchiotis, the least guerrilla leader the Greeks produced during the war. I cannot but regard it as an unmitigated disaster that the Communists spent more time fighting him than they did getting rid of the Germans (with whom their dealings seem to have been a little closer, in a discreet way, than Mrs Saraphis alleges: see Woodhouse, op cit pp 90-1). Lastly, Stalin's notorious "percentage agreement" over Greece would never have been made, had he taken the KKE seriously, but he did not: quite apart from not wanting, in 1948, to support Mediterranean adventurism (and thus needlessly antagonize the Anglo-American alliance) without a then adequate fleet, he regarded the Communist International with disfigured contempt, his private nickname for it being *Lavochka* - "The Grocer's Shop".

PETER GREEN, Department of Classics, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas 78712.

T. S. Eliot

Sir, - Robert Hewison in his original comments (January 27) and Michael Hastings in his letter (February 17) raise an issue wider than the merits of Michael Hastings's play. Both appear to assume that, once he is dead, a writer's letters should be freely available. Michael Hastings sounds outraged that he and Max Stafford-Clark were refused access to various collections which include letters by T. S. Eliot.

Surely Emily Hale, John Hayward, Hope Mirreles and Mary Trevelyan had every right to ask the people and institutions to whom they left their private papers to control their accessibility and use. Surely the trustees and librarians have every duty to respect such conditions as the testators asked for. No would-be biographer, thesis-writer or playwright has a divine right to override them. If there were no possibility of ensuring privacy, for themselves and their correspondents, for a given period, many owners of letters would prefer to destroy them, and our libraries would be the poorer.

As for Mr Hastings's statement that "access to the Eliot canon is indeed difficult" - the Eliot canon is there for all to have in the volumes of his published work. Freely available too is Valerie Eliot's edition of the original drafts of *The Waste Land* (1971) where Vivienne Eliot, far from being "Stalinized" (Hewison quoting Hastings, January 27) is very much present in the introduction. JANET ADAM SMITH, 57 Lansdowne Road, London W11.

Sir, - The Hope Mirreles papers are in the Houghton Library, Harvard, and access cannot be gained to them without the permission of the Literary Executrix of the Eliot Estate (Letters, February 24). Your correspondent Mrs Valerie Eliot is the Literary Executrix of Eliot and is a Trustee of the Mirreles papers. Why can't she be a little more forthcoming about this? It would greatly assist scholars to know these details. S. T. WALMSLEY, 10 Belsize Park Gardens, London NW3.

Sir, - Peter Redgrove (Letters, February 17) is surely talking nonsense when he suggests that we must know all about Eliot's personal relationships in order to be able to read *The Waste Land*. We do not have such information about Virgil, Dante, Chaucer or Shakespeare, to mention no others. Whether a poet is "speaking for everybody" or "merely for a certain class of alienated person" is something which is tested out on every reader now as in the past. Or is it only since Freud that people have learned to read? C. H. SISSON, Moorfield Cottage, The Hill, Langport, Somerset.

The British Library

Sir, - Probably the best way of celebrating the British Library's tenth anniversary, though belatedly, and of placing its future on a sound footing, would be to hold an inquiry into its activities since Vesting Day. The inquiry should be held in public and any interested person, including members of the staff, but, at the discretion of the chairman, without those latter-day flat-earthers who wish to Retain the Round Reading Room, might be free to offer evidence.

Nobody, least of all the British Library Board, has any reason to fear such an investigation. The achievements of the past ten years in, for example, conservation and the greatly improved service to readers, speak for themselves. Nevertheless, it has been obvious from the first that the new administration had not realized what a complex institution it was taking over and even less had it any real appreciation of the devotion and enthusiasm with which successive generations of Servants to the Trustees had built up the collections and made them available to readers. Unless something is done fairly soon (it is still not too late) to reassure the academic staff, a great tradition of scholarship and loyalty to the greatest library in the world will be lost for ever and in its place will appear just another bureaucratic

civil service department. (Or will the Board just say "Tradition ist Schlumpererei"?) G. J. ARNOLD, Treva Cottage, Tudor Road, New Barnet, Hertfordshire.

Sir, - Geoffrey Wheatcroft (Letters, February 17) is not quite right in saying that everyone knows that the present arrangements at Bloomsbury are inefficient. I have been a regular user of the Reading Room for over thirty years and, although for the first twenty years I found it exasperating, for the last dozen I have found it very good. Books generally come in less than an hour and quite often in less than forty minutes. When they don't the staff of Book Delivery Enquiries are determined and helpful. The twenty-four-hour delay for Woolwich books is a nuisance but is generally endurable provided one has remembered to check that the book is a Woolwich one to start with: my chief frustrations derive from forgetting to do that. It is true that some new books (especially from abroad) take rather long to come through and the Library does not buy all the foreign books I want, but that seems inevitable in any library today. The form of the catalogue seems to be continually improved. The whole Library gives me the impression of being run by problem-solvers and the counter staff seem to show the courtesy that comes from high morale.

Although I would also question whether Mr Wheatcroft is right in saying that there is plenty of room (it can be a bit tight in summer), all this makes me agree with him in his main contention. Will a modern reading room ever have the sound-dispersing space and the ample open shelves of the present one? SUSAN REYNOLDS, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

William James

Sir, - Writing about *A Scroll with William James* (February 17) Rosemary Dinnage says: "Where Barzun is inadequate is in his smooth acceptance of the James family and the James upbringing at its face value - liberated and loving and harmonious."

May I recall here a sheaf of letters which William James wrote when, at twenty-three years of age, he accompanied the scientist Louis Agassiz on an expedition to the Amazon river? These letters, collected and published by Carleton Sprague Smith (*Four Papers*, Vanderbilt University Press, 1951) were written by James to his mother, to his father, to brother Henry, to sister Alice. He sent them delightful drawings he made himself of Brazilian men and especially Brazilian girls. His tone is jolly, carefree and one sometimes wonders at the effect some of James's letters had on his respectable family. This comes from a letter to Alice written by William about a ball in Santarem, Pará State, where the young philosopher met a certain Jesuina: "Ah Jesuina, Jesuina, my forest queen, my tropic flower, why could I not make myself intelligible to thee... After spending an hour at Jesuina's and doing my most eloquent, she avowed to Tal that she had understood 'absolutely nothing' of my talk. She now walks upon the bench with her long hair floating free, pining for my loss."

When I first read James's letters from the Amazon I had been a long-time admirer of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and somehow the letters gave me an insight on James's Goethean progress from his own sunny, happy soul to the deeper and sadder depths of what he chose to call the "sick soul."

ANTONIO CALLADO, Rua Aperana 143, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Verdi's Falstaff

Sir, - Since my little "Epilogue" is no more than a fill or fancy appendix to James A. Hepokoski's magisterial study of Verdi's *Falstaff*, I mustn't make an epistolary meal of your reviewer Richard Osborne's comments (February 10). But they were intriguing! My essay allegedly "attacks Shakespearean criticism on" *Henry IV* and *The Winter's Tale*; in fact, criticism of these plays is not discussed.

Mr Osborne is amused by my "mentioning Siffello, Janáček and Henry James in the same

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COMMENTARY

Out of control

Simon Berry

ERNST TOLLER
The Machine Wreckers
Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow

Toller was probably the best known of the German Expressionist dramatists who prepared the way for Brecht. On the evidence of *The Machine Wreckers* (*Die Maschinenstürmer*), first performed in 1922, he is also a considerably more sympathetic figure. This is a political play, but it gives more than a passing glance at the dire personal consequences of being surrounded by the clash of wills involved in the class conflict.

The Citizens' revival, directed by Giles Havergal, lays stress on these human dimensions, prefacing each act with excerpts from Toller's letters written during five years' imprisonment for anti-war activities. *The Machine Wreckers* was the last of four prison plays which moved progressively nearer to naturalism. Even so, the subject matter – the desperate attempts by Nottingham stocking weavers in 1812 to destroy the mechanized cropping frames (culled largely from accounts in Engels) – lent itself to symbolic presentation, especially when, as in the original Berlin production, the machine itself dominated the stage.

Havergal's sparer production has a set amassed from large cable bobbins, assorted nuts and bolts and other mechanical detritus, all heaped into two huge piles like a scene from *Our Mutual Friend*. (There is even a Silas Wegg character who delights in preaching the essential corruptibility of man.) Long wires dangle bandaged, almost mummified human effigies alongside a row of printed electronic circuit boards partially veiled in the same gauze. In this way the spirit and consequences of the dawning machine age are suggested and re-

main suspended above the brutal events taking place on stage.

In the play's central scene there is a confrontation between the mill owner Ure (smoothly played by Derwent Watson) and the strikers' visionary leader Jim Cobbett. Ure's arguments are those of Social Darwinism as against Cobbett's claim that justice for the oppressed majority must eventually prevail. Instead of being stiffened in his resolve to fight the demonic machines (anachronistically described here as steam-driven), Cobbett realizes that the power of the machine cannot be destroyed: more important is the question of control. He is, however, unable to persuade Ned Lud and the strikers to pull back from actions leading to an orgy of bloodlust, and Cobbett is clubbed to death by his erstwhile followers.

On the whole this is a persuasive production of a flawed play, marrying as far as possible the rhetorical set-pieces with more digestible scenes showing the gradual barbarization of the stocking-weavers and their families. The original huge cast has been slimmed down to ten characters played by five actors. This means much switching of roles and donning and doffing of odd, rat-like masks – an extra burden for the already overworked cast who, led by Laurence Rudic as Cobbett, perform creditably. On the other hand it is a wise decision to keep the infernal machine out of sight below stage, generating suitable sound effects and lurid puffs of smoke. With all the human violence on stage already, mechanical mayhem would most definitely be *de trop*.

The revised version of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914*, which was reviewed by Geoffrey A. Hosking in the *TLS* of February 3, will be published in a new English translation by the Bodley Head during 1985. At the same time, the Bodley Head will publish its sequel, *October 1916*, Fascicle 2 in the cycle of novels now known as "The Red Wheel".

Letters

sentence", but doesn't mention my reason for doing so – which turns on the fact that these artists are (I had noticed) "unlike".

"Why", he asks with patrician weariness, "must we have *costrutti*, *regio*, *oeuvre*, *brevità* and *lazzi* in an English text when 'construction', 'reign', 'works', 'brevity' and 'jest' will do rather better?" I confess, it didn't seem to me "pretentious" to quote from Boito's libretto, in discussing what he and Verdi made of Shakespeare's English text. I refer to "Italianate *lazzi* or tricks", but not to *costrutti*. That word is an Osborne invention, while "construction" would be a very poor translation of Boito's *costrutto*: "fabrication" would do better.

Mr Osborne seems more ready to chat about Verdi's passionate concern with the text than to think about what the text does. Similarly, he is happy to refer to Verdi's "brief, intense spurts of creativity", but is dismayed by Professor Hepokoski's wish to get things into sharper focus. Doesn't "purely musical" analysis – he bravely, flatteringly wonders – "lose touch with the words as prosody, as gesture, or as a comic medium in themselves"? Well now, there's a thought.

GRAHAM BRADSHAW
Craigavon, Banbridge, Fife

Defoe's Fiction

Sir, – Although Roger Moss begins his review (January 13) of my book *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction* with the statement that I provide "the most hard evidence of the novel's involvement in a world of low discourse", every comment that follows gives the impression that this is simply an encomium on Defoe's "genius". For the sake of scholars, critics and librarians, may I point out that my work contains the first discussion of Defoe's earliest work of fiction, *Historical Collections*? It has been known about since 1830, but while John Robert Moore listed it in his *Checklist of Walter Wilson*, who first mentioned it only knew of it through the notes of an eighteenth-century clergyman. It discovered the

manuscript at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library just two years ago. If this is the best of my scholarly discoveries in this volume, I am sure that any unbiased reader will find in my discussion of the historical background to Defoe's fiction, much more than a blind enthusiasm for my author.

MAXIMILLIAN E. NOVAK
Department of English, University of California, Los Angeles

'Winds of History'

Sir, – I am deeply appreciative of D. C. Watt's review of my *Winds of History: The German Years of Lucius DuBignon Clay* (January 27). He has a point when referring to my American stance but I am at a loss to understand my alleged description of General Sir Brian Robertson as a "bumbling blimpish British soldier".

Here are my comments: "Sir Brian Robertson, – he not only represented the British Empire, he was the British Empire, some Americans quipped, – promptly objected. A brilliant officer, who could look back at a successful army and international business career, he recognized what his American colleague was up to" (p 97).

JOHN H. BACKER
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George Orwell

Sir, – Sheila Macleod (Letters, February 10) objects to my crediting her with the belief that Lawrence's attitude to women is more admirable than Orwell's because Lawrence's class background was less conducive to sexism. But her supposed correction endorses my summary: Lawrence gives evidence of "close emotional relationships with women", she asserts, because "unlike a boy of Orwell's class", he came from a section of society that didn't send its sons away to school – i.e. Lawrence's attitude to women is more admirable than Orwell's because Lawrence's class background was less conducive to sexism. Ms Macleod is,

Out of his depth

Stephen Pickles

LOUIS SPOHR
Faust
Bloomsbury Theatre

Spoher's *Faust* was one of the first musical treatments of the Faust legend. Despite a second-rate libretto (by J. C. Bernard), the composer worked fast to compose a two-act version during the summer of 1813, which he altered from time to time for productions at home and abroad. The opera was a success. Its subject and musical language were appropriate to the *Zeitgeist*, which was to spawn many confused, passionate, lonely and defiant romantic heroes. Spoher, however, was not gifted enough to rise to the occasion with any sustaining musical power. His use of leitmotif was sophisticated for its time, and effectively develops the darker side of the legend with constant musical reminders of Faust's pact with Mephistopheles and the inevitable descent to Hell. There are one or two notable arias, and some of the chorus scenes have dramatic and musical flair; but it is an uneven work and, although there was a good deal of coming and going, made a very long evening in University College Opera's bicentenary performance last week.

The most outstanding feature of this production was Russell Craig's design. Given a low budget and a small stage, his solution to the varied locations and spectacular incidents was ingenious and beautifully executed. A series of gothic arches, black with vivid gold highlights, could be flown in at varied heights, suggesting mass vaulted chambers or dismal subterranean dungeons. A parapet upstage centre afforded Sir Gulf his ramparts, from which he hectorated to great theatrical effect. Yards of black plastic on the move provided a satisfactory solution to the exit of Faust and his friends on a magic carpet; and later, the witches and Scyrox made a suitably bizarre entrance

swathed in the same plastic drop, like a shiny black belly disgorging bile. The problem, common in almost all operatic witch scenes, remained the music and the ladies. Trite rhythms and bouncy tunes reduced their scenes to comic interludes, and bright lighting made the women appear ludicrous.

The broad concept shared by producer and designers was an attempt at the Gothic manner – swirling capes, gilded skeletons which gleamed into relief whenever Faust struggled against his destiny. It was an attempt to depict those elemental and wild qualities which Spoher was unable to express in a turbulent musical language such as Weber invented for the Wolf's Glen in *Der Freischütz*. Robert Carsen's production was more elementary than elemental. His task was hard, however, and although the design afforded him maximum space on this small stage, he was unable to rise above the mundane and textbook staging of chorus and principals alike.

Musically, the evening was far more distinguished. Robert Dean sang and acted a handsome and credibly tormented Faust, his vocal technique challenged but never overcome by the demands of a difficult role. Roger Bryson was sinister in both appearance and vocal colour as Mephistopheles. The roles of Kunigunde and Röschen were beautifully sung by Elizabeth Ritchie and the very gifted Louise Winter, whose performance had the greatest musical subtlety and affecting psychological depth. It was a pity that an accident prevented Glenn Winslade from being on stage, since he sang from the pit with clear and firm tone as Count Hugo. Of the smaller parts, David March, Simon Bainbridge, James Murray and Christopher Davies all sang with friendly characterization as Faust's companions. Christopher Fyfield conducted with considerable flair, ensuring that the best of this uneven score was played and sung to impressive musical effect.

Evelyn Waugh

Sir, – In reply to Julian Barnes's review of my *Essays, Articles and Reviews of Evelyn Waugh* (February 3), may I say:

1. Barnes correctly notes that an article from *The Compleat Imbiber* has been left out of the "List of Writings not Included in This Volume". The article, properly titled "Drinking", is in the book (pp 609–10). Trivial to itself, this error typifies Barnes's confusion about all matters of fact.

2. Barnes claims that in Waugh's reviews "the only seriously rough treatment handed out goes to Auden, Spender, Beaton and one-third Connolly (the womanish aspect)". He thus unwittingly admits not knowing Waugh's "seriously rough treatment" of Mannin, Winwar, Prat, Laski, Miller, the "mascu-line" Connolly (pp 309–12), *et al.* Barnes really should not accuse Waugh of "queer-bashing" and of other imagined offences – on the basis of such meagre acquaintance with the book under review.

3. Barnes states Waugh's motives for engaging in journalism in the post-war period as follows: "In mid-career he used it to provide him with tax-free binges (Life paid him \$5,000 of which \$4,000 could be consumed in expenses; 'Spending money like a drunken sailor', wrote Waugh delightedly, and finally clocked up \$4,665). The figures are mine. But Barnes has lifted them from an introduction, nine-tenths of which is devoted to explaining the intense political and religious motives driving Waugh in mid-career. Flippant selectivity can have the same effect as downright dishonesty.

4. My book is a representative collection which aims to fulfill, as nearly as possible, the functions of a complete edition. In size and arrangement it parallels the existing volumes of Waugh's diaries and letters. Barnes's rumination about its impersonal character, length and uses are therefore quite inapposite.

DONAT GALLAGHER
James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland, Australia

As a matter of minor interest it was I and not Leonard Moore who first read the manuscript of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
JOHN SMITH
3 Adelaid Court, Hove, Sussex

Posthumous honours

Marina Warner

G. B. SHAW
Saint Joan
Olivier Theatre

Shaw wrote *Saint Joan* three years after Joan of Arc was canonized in 1920, in a heat of admiration. She was "the queerest fish among the eccentric worthies of the Middle Ages", he wrote in his long preface to the play, and the first "Protestant martyr", an apostle of modern nationalism. She won his special approval for being "the pioneer of rational dressing for women".

Out of a medieval visionary who talked with angels and saints from the age of thirteen, made a continual profession of her deep love for her feudal suzerain the king, and turned to the Pope for help in her long and appalling trial, Shaw made an earthy, sharp-witted individualist, who attributes her motives and ideas to hard common sense, fights for a twentieth-century idea of the self-determined state, and is the first person to stand up for the private conscience against institutions like the Church. His play even argues that she had a fair trial. Her brilliant originality inspires her to choose death, rather than life "like a rat in a hole", as she declares in her final speech. The wretched innocent hounded for political purposes almost vanishes. But it is Shaw's pert spiff, with her quick retorts and no-nonsense drive, who, through this famous play, has entered English consciousness, as the historical Joan of Arc.

The character Shaw has created speaks at times in words he borrowed direct from the trial, but their tone changes, and the bombast and speech-making that define her, in the famous scenes between Warwick and Cauchon (on the rise of the modern bourgeois state) and between the Inquisitor and Cauchon (on the authority of the Church), pour meaning into the figure of Joan of Arc until she becomes the self-portrait of none other than Shaw him-

self as he most desired to be seen: wit, protestant prophet, subverter, active agent of the Life Force, rational dresser. And, even, hearer of voices.

In 1912, Shaw described his working method: "I am not governed by principles; I am inspired. . . . I find myself possessed of a theme in the following manner. I am pushed by a natural need to set to work to write down the conversations that come into my head unaccountably. . . . This is not being 'guided by principles': it is hallucination; and sane hallucination is what we call play or drama." When Bandricourt remarks that her voices come from her imagination, Joan snaps back "Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us." She is echoing the playwright, not the girl who, beaten down by prolonged interrogations, still defended desperately the external and objective reality of those voices.

In spite of its status as a classic, *Saint Joan* presents considerable problems of interpretation, and the production by Ronald Eyre at the Olivier Theatre has met them head on with a strong cast (Michael Bryant as Cauchon, Philip Locke as de Stogumber, Timothy Spall minding and petulant as the Dauphin). But it has only managed to underline the difficulties. There is no attempt to point up the potential contemporary drift of some of Shaw's polemic. We do not hear the voice of public prosecutors in modern show trials in Cyril Cusack's quiet and deadly inquisitor, nor do we perceive the established rich and powerful preserving their class interests in Anton Rodgers's oddly attractive Warwick. The play could raise these present spectres, but Eyre has chosen to concentrate on the historical Joan. She proves an elusive quantity. John Gunter has built tall siege towers, straight out of medieval illuminations of battle, suggestive too of the scaffolded stake where Joan will meet her death. There is much pageantry and trumpeting, doublets and hose. Joan the rational dresser disappears under a hyperbole of gold lamé and floating dagger panels, and the soldierly men wear cuirasses and greaves as they in church or par-

lour, because the cipher of medieval man is the knight-at-arms. Shaw's lack of sensitivity to belief and his deep and often expressed antipathy for religious ideas of submission and sacrifice would not matter in themselves; Joan of Arc's mythopoetic qualities inspired others among Shaw's contemporaries to see equally anachronistic characters in her: a proto-Fascist heroine for Charles Maurras, a socialist mystic and peasant for Charles Péguy. But given that this production emphasizes the early fifteenth century, there are inauthenticities: Cauchon and Warwick huddled round a brazier in voluminous wrapping do not create the illusion of a summer campaign in the Loire valley, and the coronation on the Olivier stage is a far grander affair than Charles VII received in 1429.

Huizinga, in an essay written after seeing Sybil Thorndike's famous performance as Joan, pointed out the play's lack of a high style, and commented that Shaw's characteristic levity, his switches from lofty talkiness to cute sallies, made it hard to appreciate the tragedy closing down on the central figure. Frances de la Tour is an actress who can convey pent up repression with rare intensity, but as Joan she seems at a loss how to express Joan's religious fervour and patriotic commitment when clever men all around her are busy undermining them with their modern functionalist cynicism. She has decided not to play Joan for laughs after the first scene, and often delivers her speeches in accents breaking with rhapsody, in repetitive cadence. It turns out that if Shaw's Joan isn't played like a feisty country wench, the play's structure falls apart. Frances de la Tour comes perilously near to showing up Joan as truly insufferable. She is at her best in the Epilogue, when the list of her posthumous honours leaves her totally and properly bewildered.

Shaw's contrariness sets his producers some acute paradoxes in *Saint Joan*: the more it is performed as a full-blooded historical drama, the greater the sense grows that behind every character lurks an Edwardian country house guest engaged in a charade, the *Sainting of the Venerable Shaw*.

ramshackle "pondok" in Korsten, a "Non-white" shanty-town on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth, has been bulldozed to the ground by the white man's "slum clearance". Wandering as they have wandered before and will again, they have reached the Swartkops river estuary, further out even than the African townships, whose lights flicker mockingly at them in the night. Boesman, burning with bitterness and self-disgust, takes his feelings out on Lena in an endless round of pointless recriminations. She has borne him nothing but death, and appears to survive only with the aid of her regular "dop" of cheap wine. Yet despite herself, and all that she has suffered at the hands of the whites and her partner, Lena wants to sing, to dance, to stamp down on the earth to which her poor, broken body will soon return. Her song celebrates, as it reflects, her miserable life: Korsten has its empties Swartkops got its bait Lena's got her bruises Cause Lena's a *Hotnot* mela . . .

It is a transcendent moment. Her struggle to create meaning out of the simple, appalling facts of her existence provides the whole emotional impetus behind the play – which is effectively her play, and which lives or dies according to the actress who performs her.

Janet Suzman, an award-winning Hester in *Hello and Goodbye* some years ago, who knows the South African (but not Eastern Cape) accent, and who is a highly sensitive, intelligent and experienced actress, must have seemed an obvious choice for the part. And she is largely successful in suggesting the pathos and vitality of Lena, cackling and prancing around her morose Boesman, dodging his blows and curses, fingering her bruises, or gazing confusedly out into the night as she tries to remember where they have been. But somehow we are not moved as we should be. Fugard's theatre is "actor's theatre": he expects his chosen performers to "burn themselves alive, and wave to the audience through the flames", as he puts it (borrowing the image

from Artaud). He wrote Lena with Yvonne Bryceland in mind, and her stunning portrayal of the outcast Coloured woman in the original production, and then later in the film version, has established a standard difficult to match. What Bryceland conveyed, and what is missing from this production, is a dimension of extremity: an intensity of suffering and, at the same time, defiance, which transcends the circumstances of everyday life. Stuart Wilson, who plays Boesman, looks as little like an emaciated "hotnot" as a well-fed Englishman can; nor does he show any sign of knowing, much less being able to imitate, the Coloured man's grotesquely servile pantomime before the white master ("Ja, baas, dankie, ou baasi!") as he begs to be excused for existing. Without that quality of authenticity, it is difficult to persuade the audience of Lena's profound, driving need: to be "witnessed" in her suffering, whether by the little dog that once used to sit and watch her or, now, by the dying black man whose own suffering is as incomprehensible as his language (he speaks only Xhosa), but who can at least repeat, "Lena, Lena". Tommy Buson plays Outa with quiet dignity, serving as an affirmation to Lena of her existence while his mere presence provokes Boesman into fits of futile jealousy. Boesman's behaviour reveals the depths to which the human spirit can sink in South Africa, when he realizes that the black man poses more of a threat to him dead than alive: "How do you throw away a dead kaffer?" *Boesman and Lena* is a work of enormous power; this revival can not do much more than remind us of that.

Forthcoming literary events at Riverside Studios include a rehearsed reading of *Ndipala Nkasi* by the young South African writer and painter Orde Levison on March 3 at 4pm (a benefit for West London Anti-Apartheid); and on March 15 at 7.30pm Ntozake Shange will read from her new book *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo* (a benefit for a Black Women's Writing Event to be held next spring).



A self-portrait by Yun Di-sô (1668–1715), one of the items in the exhibition *Treasures from Korea at the British Museum*, and reproduced in its catalogue, edited by Roderick Whitfield (224pp. £8.95. 0 7141 1430 8). Self-portraits are almost entirely unknown in the Far East.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 163

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reached this office not later than March 23. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 163" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on March 30.

1 Indeed, the brewhouse was a terrible place, which made one remember the worst that one had ever heard of Sweeney Todd.

When he entered it this afternoon, another tale came back to him, that one of his grandfather's workmen, who had worked in the brewhouse, had so soaked himself with spirits that at last, as Ellen said, "he took fire and burned all blue. There was nothing left of him but some black oil on the floor."

2 I remained more than a minute panting for breath, and then ventured to draw back the curtains of the bed – my mother was not there! but there appeared to be a black mass in the centre of the bed. I put my hand fearfully upon it – it was a sort of unctuous, plucky cinder.

3 Here is a small burnt patch of flooring; here is the tinder from a little bundle of burnt paper, but not so light as usual, seeming to be steeped in something; and here is – is it the cinder of a small charred and broken log of wood sprinkled with white ashes, or is it coal? O Horror, he is here! and this from which we run away, striking out the light and overturning one another into the street, is all that represents him.

Competition No 159

Winner: H.C. Collett

Answers:

1 He that will not work according to his faculty, let him perish according to his necessity: there is no law juster than that.
Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, chapter 1.

2 Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them.
H. D. Thoreau, *Walden*, chapter 1.

3 I am looking forward to the time when we men shall have nothing to do but lie in bed till twelve, read two novels a day, have nice little five o'clock teas all to ourselves, and tax our brains with nothing more trying than discussions upon the latest patterns in trousers.
Jerome K. Jerome, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*.

Traditions of tradition

J. P. Kenyon

ERNST BREISACH
Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern
 487pp. University of Chicago Press. £28 (paperback, £10.80).
 0226 07274 6
ROBERT WILLIAM FOGEL and G. R. ELTON (Editors)
Which Road to the Past?: Two Views of History
 136pp. Yale University Press. £9.95.
 0300 03011 8
M. A. FITZSIMONS
The Past Recaptured: Great Historians and the History of History
 230pp. University of Notre Dame Press. £13.60.
 0268 01550 3

In the preface to *Historiography*, Ernst Breisach eschews "the temptation to write a handbook or encyclopaedia, with the obligation inherent in such works to mention as many worthy historians and their works as possible" — no doubt he has in mind that extremely useful compendium by James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing* (1942) — but up to the nineteenth century he seems to have done just that. He may have omitted, and I may have forgotten, a few minor practitioners of the art, but he does seem nervously intent on summarizing or at least mentioning every historian who has put pen to paper.

His attempt to avoid this kind of catalogue only leads to confusion. This is clearly a book with a serious purpose, to which Professor Breisach has devoted the labour of years, and it is unfortunate that that purpose is never made clear. It is difficult to detect any conceptual framework, despite periodic announcements of its existence, and much of the book approximates to chronicles or annals, punctuated by brief, gnomic explications which bear no apparent relation to their context.

Not the least problem is to determine what Breisach means by "historiography": is he considering the technique of historical writing as it developed over the centuries, or the content of history? The latter, which is the more usual American usage, seems to be Breisach's, but the decision to concentrate on matter rather than form commits him to a great deal of tedious summarization, and tends to iron out the differences between individual historians and

Weighing the evidence

Robin Seager

MICHAEL CRAWFORD (Editor)
Sources for Ancient History
 238pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50 (paperback, £6.95).
 0521 28958 0

To examine in a series of essays the problems presented by the various types of evidence available to ancient historians is a potentially useful exercise. The four pieces presented here, by Emilio Gabba, Fergus Millar, A. M. Snodgrass and Michael Crawford himself, are of uneven quality.

To ask any writer to deal in this compass with every kind of literary source is a very tall order, and it is hard to discern the rationale of Gabba's attempt to fill it. His first section, is on ancient historiography. Several general points are well taken, including the importance of ascertaining for whom the historian was writing and the need to understand what he leaves out and why. Since the next two sections are on Homer and early Greek poetry, it seems briefly as if, now history proper has been dealt with, we shall get a more or less chronological survey of the other major forms of ancient literature. But no, next comes a mysterious category known as vernacular literature; whatever that may mean it is exemplified by Statius' *Silvae* and the *Satyricon*. But if the *Silvae* are the portrait of a society — a fair enough claim — what of the poems of Catullus? Comparison and contrast would have been profitable here. The rest of the essay leaps about in bewildering

even between schools of history, and to place some historians in an awkward context. When the approach to Tacitus is much the same as the approach to Froissart we are the victims of an unhappy intellectual levelling process, which fails to distinguish between Clarendon and Burnet as types of historians, and assesses one as an excellent writer of narrative (which I would have thought was the one thing he was not), and the other simply as a late contributor to an ongoing debate on the Reformation. In the same way Hume and Gibbon seem to have slipped out of their proper frame, which was the European Enlightenment. Above all, the failure to discuss changing perspectives on past time, the discovery of the value of sources, the growing distinction between primary and secondary sources, the relation of history to other forms of literature and its susceptibility to general literary trends, gives the whole book a curiously flat, one-dimensional character.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Breisach's approach is much more selective, but even here I feel that his material is overwhelming him and his conceptual framework is not strong enough to control it; his chapter headings boldly chart a course which his text does not follow. It is typical that his eight-page epilogue constitutes an admirably wise and lucid review of the state of history today, which everyone could read with profit, but it seems quite unrelated to what has gone before, which could without too great unkindness be described as "pottering". He touches on a variety of relevant topics — Marxism in history, computerization, the *Annales* school, psychohistory — without dealing with any of them thoroughly or offering us any new insights. Even his remarks on modern United States history, where we would look for strength, are little more than a desultory résumé, and it does not help that they are scattered over three chapters (23, 25, 27). It is typical that a historian like Robert W. Fogel should be considered only in relation to the economic history of the antebellum South, and not as an important innovator, in ideas as well as technique. It is the kind of book we finish with no clear idea why the author started it.

However, Fogel himself comes to life in a published debate with Geoffrey Elton on *Which Road to the Past?* In fact this is not so much a debate as a long statement by one of the leading American proponents of "cliometrics" and the "New History", as it is used to be called, and a counter-statement by the leading British

champion of traditional methods. It is interesting, but it falls rather flat, largely because neither man is willing to adopt his expected role, of predatory leopard or sturdy rhinoceros respectively. There are some expressions of repentance on both sides for past intransigence, assurances of mutual respect for each other's methods (though with the strong implication that neither will willingly adopt them), and in general a mutual tolerance and goodwill which verges on back-slapping, though not quite.

Fogel admits that in the recent past antagonism on the part of traditional historians has been "flamed [sic] by the extremely aggressive stance of the cliometricians and by exaggerated claims". The epic resentments thus aroused, as Elton says, are more evident in North America than in Britain, where traditionalism is more heavily entrenched, and also where money for avant-garde research is not so abundant. But in any case, says Fogel, "the anticipated rout of traditional historians has not materialised, and history has not been transformed into a science"; cliometrics has not made narrative obsolete, in fact it can even make an important contribution to "the elaboration of narrative", and "the grudging concessions on both sides are tacit admissions that neither mode of research by itself is adequate to deal with all the questions that concern historians".

Elton is not so sure. "Historians", he ominously declares, "may rightly be divided into those who believe that techniques exist which can defeat the limitations built into historical knowledge by the fact that the past is not here to be studied but must be recovered so far as is possible from the always insufficient and ambiguous traces it has left behind, and those who have come to terms with the disappointment implicit in these limitations." Moreover, he goes on to say, "scientific history slights the major part of what engages traditionalists, namely the event itself". With customary brio he rejects many of Fogel's concepts and some of his examples: "Feudalism", for instance, "is a categorising concept invented to make discourse easier; it never existed in reality and cannot therefore have risen or declined." He dismisses Fogel's attempts to define traditional historical method, and he is very hard on *The Harvard Guide to American History*.

However, Elton is not spoiling for a fight; rather I get the impression that he is turning round and round in his bed to make it more comfortable. Moreover, he probably feels that

he has won the battle for traditional history which he fought in the 1960s and 1970s; and certainly he has not lost it. As his free use of the term "traditional" implies, he is no longer prepared to argue that what he and those of his temper write is history and nothing else really is. It is easy for him, of course, to offer as propitiatory sacrifices a few fellow-traditionalists like Christopher Hill, Trevilyn or Neale, who have never been high in his affection or regard, but he also offers "unreserved apologies" for his own "unregenerate attitudes" towards such worthy bodies as the Cambridge Group for Population Studies. As we have seen, he deplores the heated conflicts that have beset American academe, and even has a kind word, at one point, for Lawrence Stone. Getting the bit between his teeth (or biting hard on the pill, whichever metaphor one prefers), he even throws over his shivering scientific colleagues the cloak of the Blessed Maidland, though I feel he does this rather in the spirit of the Good Samaritan: Only poor work by either sort produces apparently categorical differences, and only consciousness of poor work on one's own part leads to that emballed exclusiveness which causes traditional historians to regard their scientific brethren as uncivilised yahoos and causes the latter to repay the compliment with charges of obscurantist indifference to what really matters. Maidland's seamless garment of history clothes us all.

A careless reader might assume that the phrase "one's own part" refers to Elton himself, but I rather doubt it. This is vintage Elton: the patient, ruthless lucidity; the Rankenian condescension — "if some otherwise respectable people have lapsed into error on this point we may treat them with that spirit of forgiveness which draws strength from the knowledge that they will soon learn better"; the Gibbonian dismissal of those obstinately in error, often in footnotes reminiscent of John Oldmixon's indexes. Fogel has yet to achieve this level, but his rather more prolix contribution is a useful exposition of the case for scientific history, made with temperance and discretion.

The Past Recaptured need not detain us long, and I mention it largely because a professional title and the insignia of a university press may, no doubt unintentionally, rouse unwarranted expectations. It is a series of short public lectures for general consumption on ten major historians, from Herodotus to A. J. A. Greig. It is agreeably done, but not at all deep, and certainly there is nothing novel in it. In a less distinguished context it could be termed a pot-boiler.

tics, is, to the layman at least, highly technical and somewhat depressing. He berates historians for uncritically following the latest numismatic manual, but they rarely have any choice, for the arcane of the numismatist's empire are too often only grudgingly and partially revealed. After reading this essay the historian may wonder what he has lost: the general impression with which one comes away is that numismatics very rarely throw light on anything but the history of coinage. It would have been helpful to have a fairly full discussion, rather than just a couple of oracular warnings, about what can and cannot (or rather, alas, should not) be done in interpreting types and legends as propaganda. Particularly interesting would be an attempt to relate ancient coins not only to modern money but also to such similar modern media as the postage-stamp and the postmark. How do the connoisseurs of Augustus compare to such slogans as "Come to Clun for sun and fun"? What, if any, ancient parallels are there for the attempt to distract our attention from a present marked by division and lack of achievement by reminding us of such widely admired and therefore unifying figures from "our" glorious past as Newton, Shakespeare and Wren? Such questions are worth asking, as well as being more fun than die-stamps.

History of Technology: Eighth Annual Volume, 1983 contains eight long essays edited by Norman Smith (153pp. Maassell. £20. 07200 1683 X). Contributors include W. Addis and Thomas Day on "Samuel Brown: His Influence on the Design of Suspension Bridges".

Pillars of radicalism

Kenneth O. Morgan

W. R. LAMBERT
Drink and Sobriety in Victorian Wales c. 1820-1895
 294pp. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. £15.95.
 07083 0842 7
GWYN JONES AND MICHAEL QUINN
Fountains of Praise: University College, Cardiff, 1883-1983
 207pp. University College, Cardiff Press. £7.95.
 090649 529
PENNAR DAVIES
E. Tegu Davies
 101pp. Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Welsh Arts Council. £2.95.
 07083 0842 2
HYWEL FRANCIS
Miners against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War
 304pp. Lawrence and Wishart. £12.50 (paperback, £4.95).
 08315 577 1

The Welsh instinctively drive on the left. For well over a hundred years, they have praised the Lord that they are a radical nation. Since the 1860s, they have provided an almost impregnable stronghold for the British left. Until the First World War, the Liberals were overwhelmingly ascendant. In the halcyon year of 1906, not one Tory could get returned in any constituency to the west of Offa's Dyke. After 1918, the Labour Party took over the dominant role, especially in the coalfield, and retained it down to 1979. Quite apart from these parliamentary aspects, historians have lovingly focused on frequent outbursts of pre-industrial protest and civil tumult. A belief has been fostered of the Welsh as incorrigible rebels, born extremists, rioters against tithe-owners or coal-owners, forever knocking over tollgates or enclosure walls, with folk heroes from Dic Penderyn to S. O. Davies, and legendary popular uprisings at Taff Vale, Tonypan-dy and Tryweryn. The modern phase of Welsh nationalism began with direct action — the political arson of Saunders Lewis and his colleagues at an RAF bombing school in Llyn in 1936. The recent wave of incendiarianism aimed at "second homes" lies in this tradition. It is not surprising either that the origins of the demonstrations at Greenham Common lie in a meeting held at Cardiff, or that key figures in the women's anti-nuclear movement should come from the Welsh valleys. After all, even in a male-dominated society, the "Welsh extremist" could equally well be female.

Only recently, indeed, has the conventional wisdom about Welsh radicalism, and age-long traditions of constitutional or extra-constitutional action, been seriously questioned. Only now are historians speculating whether the dominant tendency in Welsh history is indeed a militant tendency. Examination of the long record of quiescence, conformity and social order in Wales — with outbursts of jingo imperialism or conventional patriotism during two world wars or in blessing the Prince of Wales — may place the cliché-ridden view of the Welsh as Pavlovian left-wingers in some doubt. After all, compared with the history of twentieth-century Ireland, the story of modern Wales is the very model of tranquillity and equipoise. To fuel this painful reassessment, there has come the profound shock of the 1983 general election returns, with the Tories winning no less than fourteen Welsh seats and a third of the popular vote, only just below the 37 per cent retained by a visibly ageing and struggling Labour Party. At the very least, then, Welsh historians should take more seriously the indices of consensus as well as of conflict in their nation's tormented, schizoid past. They must expose with new rigour (and less rhetoric and sentimentality) the essential components of their radical heritage, rural and industrial, sacred and profane.

The books reviewed here provide some helpful clues towards this process of revisionism. The birth of an authentic national tradition of popular protest has often been located in the 1830s: that turbulent decade spanning the Merthyr uprising and the martyrdom of Dic Penderyn, and the 1839 Chartist march on Newport and the transportation of John Frost.

The first crystallization of a Welsh working class has been linked to these dramatic, disturbing events. But the 1830s proved to be a red false dawn in the evolution of a Welsh radical heritage. By the mid-1840s, they were largely forgotten as a massive disjunction took place in the memory of the Welsh proletariat, and collective amnesia descended.

Far more enduring and powerful in the radical tradition was its identification with the upsurge of popular nonconformity, and its associated political and religious crusades, during the mid-nineteenth century. One of the most important of these campaigns is admirably described by W. R. Lambert in *Drink and Sobriety in Victorian Wales*. He achieves for Wales — and there can be no higher praise — what Brian Harrison has done for the temperance movement in Victorian England. Lambert's early chapters consist of a masterly synoptic view of the place of beer-drinking and of public houses in early nineteenth-century society, especially in the thirsty coalfield. He also explains the rapid transition of the chapels from a moderate to a teetotal stance on the drink question, and the rise of mass temperance organizations in the wake of evangelical revivalism. The composition of the nonconformist temperance movement (always much more a chapel than a Church affair, significantly enough) is striking — most powerful among the Calvinistic Methodists, those Stalinists of the *salut*, weakest among the Baptists who, with their stress on personal decision and moral commitment, were "the wet sect" where drink was concerned. By the 1870s, after the galvanizing impact of the 1859 religious revival, "taking the pledge" had become for Welsh Methodist boys what the Bar Mitzvah was for young Jews.

Above all, Lambert's book emphasizes the location of the drink crusade in that radical nonconformist civic culture which gripped the Welsh popular mind in the mid-century. This made the Welsh temperance movement significantly different from that of England. Left-wing publishers like Thomas Gee of the *Finner* made the drink trade the launching-pad for a new mass agitation. The rising Liberal Party linked brewers with landlords and parsons in the "unholy Trinity" of class enemies. Young politicians like Tom Ellis and Lloyd George found in the temperance cause a unique motor for political advancement. Indeed, the Baptist Lloyd George, a "wet sect" populist, became for the UK Alliance one of their temperance whips; licensing reform provided the theme for his maiden speech in 1890. The Welsh temperance movement, therefore, while religious by origin soon became highly political. By the 1870s, control of the drink trade was argued not so much on general moral grounds as in terms of Wales being a nation, and the clear popular demand there for temperance legislation. The 1881 Welsh Sunday Closing Act was a landmark in British constitutional history, the first legislative statement of the nationhood of Wales. Monmouthshire was embraced in 1921, and the Act survived, for all its manifest hypocrisies, until the referendums of 1961. Even after the local polls in 1982, two rural enclaves remain firm in the sabbatarian cause today, one appropriately being Dwyfor in Caernarfon, Lloyd George's home base. Lambert's dismissal of the anti-drink movement in the mid-1890s is perhaps a shade brisk. It may be hoped that he can build on his superbly researched work by tracing the lasting impact of the drink issue in Welsh politics and on the career of Lloyd George, down to the First World War and beyond. After all, it was beer, not shells, which first undermined the Liberal government in the spring of 1915.

Temperance was one of the pillars of the radical culture from which Welsh liberalism sprang. Education was another, and one which, at least in the form of the federal University of Wales, survives undimmed down to our own time. These are years of celebration for the Welsh university colleges, those glorious legacies of the Liberal ascendancy and national reawakening between 1880 and 1914. The University College of Cardiff, the third of Lord Aberdare's late-Victorian triplets, has had the novel idea of commemorating its centenary, not with an official history but with a stylish literary symposium, *Fountains of Praise*, to mark a century of strenuous en-

deavour in Cathays Park. Some of the contents, deftly packaged by Gwyn Jones and Michael Quinn, are inevitably similar to the affectionate pages of other commemorative university volumes. There are good poems, in Welsh and Latin as well as English; vignettes of former giants on the teaching staff such as that angular patriot, W. J. Gruffydd (recalled here by the late David Williams, himself another of the titans of Rhiwbina); memories of old students at work and play. Among those who recall their youthful days on the campus are that elegant actress, Sian Phillips; the rugby stand-off-half, Billy Cleaver; and, more unexpectedly, Roy Jenkins, who spent a year at Cardiff as a staging-post between Abersychan grammar school and Balliol. Most interest, though, attaches to the two historical chapters. Gwyn A. Williams contributes a typically colourful account of the inspired lobbying that secured the South Wales college for Cardiff rather than Swansea in 1883. As in other higher education institutions at the time, the need for a new class of trained technical specialists on the German model was spelt out — and where better to mass-produce them than in the "coal metropolis" itself?

Yet Gwynedd O. Pierce's informative and elegant chapter shows that even late-Victorian Cardiff, long considered an Anglicized, mercantile appendage to the principality, was also swept up in the heady Welsh national consciousness and radical currents of the time. The college's first principal, J. Victor Jones, was an ardent Welsh-speaking patriot, and the brother of two Liberal MPs, no less than a scientific polymath and an educational statesman of genius. The Welshness of Cardiff college was part of a wider colonization of what Alfred Zimmermann called the "American Wales" of the south-east by the Welsh from the valleys and the rural hinterland. Typically, the Welsh-speaking community in Cardiff — notably that astonishing red-bearded, self-taught carpenter, coffee-house proprietor, radical politician and all-purpose bard, Edward Thomas (Coch-

farf) — played a decisive role. This important theme of the Welshness of late-Victorian Cardiff — one totally ignored in recent studies of the history of the city — is here given its rightful prominence. Cardiff's current administrators can take renewed inspiration from this affectionate tribute to former pioneers.

This radical heritage also had important cultural overtones. Indeed, the Welsh-language literary renaissance in poetry, prose and scholarship in the early years of this century, the world of the periodicals, *Y Beirniad* and *Y Llenor*, was among its most fertile consequences. Some of its features are well recaptured in Pennar Davies's study of Edward Tegu Davies (1880-1967), a leading Welsh Wesleyan minister, but best known for his writings — novels, short stories, essays, and above all some irresistibly attractive children's stories. Even if the rest of his literary output was uneven, children's books like *Hunangofiant Tomi* (Tommy's Autobiography) were masterpieces of their kind, Wales's reply to *Swallows and Amazons*. Yet a deep melancholy pervades much of Tegu Davies's career, an overwhelming anxiety about the declining moral force of nonconformity and the older chapel-based culture from the turn of the century onwards. Like Gwyn Jones, Tegu Davies was one of the anti-war minority in 1914-18. He saw how the old radical and national rhetoric could be perverted or debased, not only by Lloyd George but even by sensitive *littérateurs* like Owen M. Edwards and John Morris-Jones in waging their holy war against "the Hun". After 1918, Tegu Davies's life affords a commentary on the eroding self-confidence of nonconformist, rural Welsh society, and the intellectual and moral collapse of the chapels. Pennar Davies, himself a fine theologian as well as a distinguished poet, sensitively traces some aspects of this disillusion, which gradually swamped the community culture of which Tegu Davies was so notable a symbol.

After the war, the radical tradition was propelled into new directions. The call of

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ROLAND MATHIAS
Burning Brambles: Selected Poems 1944-1979
 163pp. Llandysul, Dyfed: Gomer Press. £6.75.
 0850887283

Let me begin with two questions: (1) is there a substantial twentieth-century tradition of Anglo-Welsh poetry, as there is, for instance, of Anglo-Irish poetry? (2) If so, is a new generation keeping the Anglo-Welsh tradition alive? Or is it melting, willy-nilly, into the British cultural pot, along with Irish and Scots poetry?

The answer to the first question is clearly "yes", although, since Dylan Thomas's death, Anglo-Welsh poetry has been scantily recognized in England. Deference is universally paid to R. S. Thomas as a Christian apologist - "strugglist" might be a more appropriate term. But Thomas stands apart from the central rhetorical/musical tradition of Welsh verse as he draws ever more laconically from the deep well of spiritual paradox. More representative of the Anglo-Welsh are Roland Mathias and Anthony Conran, born in 1915 and 1931 respectively. That the work of these major living writers is neglected in England may be due partly to power struggles between establishments and anti-establishments on a relatively tiny literary stage. And yet American and Irish poets have loomed large on this stage, have been acknowledged as masters and influences. It is evident, then, that the Welsh have to some extent deliberately kept themselves to themselves. Gomer Press and Christopher Davies, until recently the main publishers of Welsh and Anglo-Welsh literature, are notoriously reluctant to distribute their books, even in Wales. Those Anglo-Welsh poets who, in Peter Lewis's words, have "crashed the Offa barriers" tend to be published in England: Dannie Abse, Gillian Clarke, R. S. Thomas, Jean Earle; and among the honorary Welsh, Jeremy Hooker, Nigel Welsh and the American, Mary Johnson.

But now Poetry Wales Press has come onto the scene with a long list of Anglo-Welsh collections. Obviously it intends to bring Welsh publishing into line with small press, high quality English publishing. All these books - eight collections of poems from eight new Welsh poets - are professionally produced, well designed, attractively presented and modestly priced. It is therefore possible to approach them - bearing my second question in mind - as these books: Anglo-Welsh in character and tradition? For their value as evidence as well as their intrinsic merit?

Certainly all these new poets have a certain competent approach to craft and technique. There is really not a bad book among these collections, which is less than many English poets they have learned from, example

(writing workshops?) what *not* to do. As Sheenagh Pugh - whose *Earth Studies and Other Voyages* is a good read all the way through - writes of William McGonagall "It isn't what you say, but how it's said". Yes, but in saying things well and pungently, as Sheenagh Pugh does, she gives herself away as an English-speaking woman poet of the late twentieth century. In fact, she has quite a lot to say. Nearly half her book is devoted to monologues by an imaginary (male) teacher who is giving lessons on the geography, history and religion of Earth to child-survivors now removed to a planet called Terra 2. Yet these are not science fiction poems; they are carefully angled, unimpassioned, bitterly ironic descriptions of what we ought to cherish on earth now. Sheenagh Pugh is particularly good at working little rhymes into her icily cool stanzas, and her efficient probing of exactly how horrible a ruined earth would be, of how pleasant it has been and *could* be, shows her to be an excellent poet, deserving of many readers - but not particularly a Welsh poet.

Tony Curtis also writes under the shadow of nuclear war. His poetry is shot through with the kind of tenderness and open-heartedness we have come to associate with the Americans, and many good poems in *Letting Go* are personal lyrics or narratives. Significantly, the first, title poem and the last poem, "Tortoise", gain strength from the impersonality of their insight, as if the poet had come to the end of his "confessional" period and was striking out into more challenging territory. The conclusion of "Tortoise" comments powerfully on the journey of any artist, at the end of which personality (like the tortoise's body) is lost, while artifacts survive:

To travel and come to nothing,
 leaving behind something shaped, hard and scoured
 out:
 an object which no longer holds you or needs you,
 being

finished, and what it was always growing towards.
 Good, tough stuff, especially in these days of personality worship. Yet, in *Letting Go*, the emphasis is again a Welsh, even, perhaps, anti-provincial. Wales, of course, provides the scenery, the poet's family and past, but the last language, the free forms, the serious outlook (or, when Curtis wants it, the comic outlook) suggest that the poems, really, could come from anywhere. And Curtis's acute consciousness of the cultural scene - references to Lowell and Heaney, a long poem set at the Arvon Centre at Totleigh Barton, five (excellent) poems after paintings by Andrew Wyeth - gives the impression of a poet free-floating away from his roots, trying on voices until finally (in one or two strong poems of the first order) he fastens on his own.

Of all these younger poets, Robert Minhinnick is perhaps the best known outside Wales, and a number of accolades testify to his merit on the back of this third collection, *Life Sentences*. To me, Minhinnick's poems have the virtues - and some of the drawbacks - of Douglas Dunn's. Minhinnick, like Dunn, is technically adroit, but somehow he evinces strain. One wonders if what he has to say has been worth the effort of saying it so well. Like Dunn, too, Minhinnick is best when he writes from memories of his childhood. "The Party", from a sequence called "Inventing a Childhood", is typical of Minhinnick at his best: the killing day meant a party in the village. Older and stone-ginger unstopped when the working ceased, the familiar talk of the slaughter-man wiping his blades on dockleaves, pig-blood dark as blackberries

Trodden into the dust. And then a joke, a ritual, alarming to some. The youngest child placed inside the split carcass, and lifted out laughing from the wound's long slot. Here is the carefully laid-back style of so much contemporary English poetry, the deliberate evasion of comment (and 'alarming to some' emphasizes the poet's engaged detachment); the prose-like rhythm, the horrifying, ordinary rural life.

One of the more memorable poems in *Life Sentences* is called "Catching My Breath", a poem about childbirth. The poem is given to the father/husband in the labour ward: "She came with a cry. The sudden child, her skin like grapeskin", complete with pointed smile and accurate description of the nubbles which pain and joy are first encountered. Mike

Jenkins, in his second collection, *Empire of Smoke*, makes a four-part sequence of monologues out of the birth of his daughter. Like all of Jenkins's poems, these have a naturalness, almost a clumsiness which, oddly, is more endearing than annoying. Jenkins is conscious of being a poet for whom the working-class life of Merthyr is particularly meaningful. He is honest, unpretentious, sensitive and readable. But again, both Jenkins and Minhinnick are twentieth-century rather than Welsh in their approach to language; they are poets who use English conventions to describe Welsh places and their own Welsh lives.

The best of Duncan Bush's poems are very good indeed, although he, too, is not particularly Welsh. *Aquarium* is a book of considerable weight. Observation leads to thought and on to unobtrusive conclusions - as in "Near Tilbury Dock" where the boys "fishing the squalid Essex shore" come there mainly for company, catching little, "not talking but at least / without the guilt of loneliness". A nice perception which leads to considerations of a more literary kind, "Sometimes it's the same with words, / though this too has been said before." And indeed, this is, in an unpretentious way, a very literary collection, with translations of Mallarmé and Baudelaire, and some fine reconstructions from Montale and Pavese.

The source of Bush's poems, as of Jenkins's, is unembarrassed compassion; and it's the nakedness of this compassion, a delicate sense of the universality of suffering that characterizes most of this new Welsh writing. Graham Thomas's nostalgia of the decaying mining villages, the chapels demolished, the people displaced, the life of the valleys dying, is finely caught in his impressive first collection, *The One Place*. Joyce Herbert in *Approaching Snow* delicately picks her way between distinctions of class, now and in the nineteenth century. Christine Evans's *Looking Inland* charts her private sensitivities in poems which are promising rather than finished. But the point is, all these poets are perceptive, full of social responsibility, compassionate, concerned. Yet there is something missing, an essential Welshness which has been left out, a music - for that's what it is - which has been replaced by the basic speech-rhythms of English English, not Welsh English.

One only has to compare the language of Roland Mathias's *Burning Brambles* with the comparatively prose-like rhythms of these younger writers to see where the differences lie:

The water is hard in the well
 But it never falls;
 The cliff-top fields are infinite salt
 When the gales flock and pummel
 Roof and farmstack and holt;
 But the worm speaks well
 Of the earth, the pheasant
 Is heavy with praise in the lane:
 The sea-birds, for all their grieving,
 Gambol and dive at the nape of the storm:
 And man embroiders his tales . . . (*Laus Deo*)

The rhetorical ring of the words, the bell-like cadences are not here forced upon the meaning; they are the meaning of the poem.

In the past, the Welsh, like the Gaels, have drawn on two main traditions: from a bardic tradition of tale-telling and song on the one hand, and from a prophetic tradition of poets, on the other. We may feel we can no longer expect a poet to command the authority of a Prospero, standing between the metaphysical storm and the ordinary earth. But the bardic tradition is still alive in Wales - in Welsh-language poetry it is still the music, the technique (eg, *cynghanedd*) which pick out the real poet from the flock: Dylan Thomas and Vernon Watkins, in English, were both, in their different ways, such poets. Anthony Conran, Roland Mathias, Alison Blaisie (whose *eagles* is published by Aun Books in Port Talbot) - these are poets of an apparently dying tradition. For the most part, Anglo-Welsh poetry has become no more (and no less) than another British poetry of the post-industrial age. Is this a good or a bad thing? It might be said that in the compassion and concern for Wales which is manifest in these recent poems, there remains a core of narrative for which Wales is famous. More music and less prose in their verse might make of any of the talented younger poets mentioned here the major Anglo-Welsh poet Wales deserves.

Under threat

P. J. Kavanagh

R. S. THOMAS
Selected Prose
 Edited by Sandra Anstey
 187pp. Glamorgan: Poetry Wales Press. £8.95.
 0907476 279

The English have always found it hard to understand the bitterness of peoples they have conquered. Why did the Irish want independence? Why do the Welsh disfigure signposts? Why did a Scots poet like Hugh MacDiarmid hate them so much? To the English it is as though an Englishman still brooded on the Norman Conquest, and insisted on the revival of Anglo-Saxon. For the anger is certainly to do with the destruction of a language.

R. S. Thomas is not a native Welsh-speaker. Though born in Cardiff, he spent most of his first six years in England, and only taught himself Welsh, slowly and painfully, when he settled in the Welsh countryside as a young clergyman. In a sense he taught himself Wales, also, by wandering about it, a returned exile, lamenting what had been done to its Welshness, and the continuing destruction.

More than once, in a reprinted lecture, he breaks off to wonder if his audience thinks he wants to put the clock back, and defends himself from the charge. But being what he is, a lover of hills and mountains and lonely farmhouses and the "characters" they produce, a detester of tarmac and factories and pylons, he does not convince. He does want to turn back the clock, knows he cannot, and writes in his dilemma. It is this discomfort that makes his Welsh pieces worth reading. Not for their argument but for the sense they give of being part of a threatened culture, what it feels like to see so many of your fellow-natives co-operating in their own cultural diminishment.

In the process he raises many interesting questions: why, for example, have the Irish managed to remain recognizably themselves in English, when the Welsh have not? Why have many Scottish writers (especially MacDiarmid, his hero) made it their "task to de-Anglicise Scotland, and so get back to the native roots", when they have so few Welsh equivalents? "For it is England, the home of the industrial revolution, and the consequent twentieth-century rationalism, that have been the winter in our native pastures, and we must break their grip, and the grip of all the quillings and yes-men before we can strike that authentic note."

In a review of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, about the treatment of the North American Indians, he draws a parallel: "Wales was conquered by the English and our best land taken". And, as did some Indians, some Welsh see advantage in it: "Our wish is to live at peace with the English, to the point of servility. They too want to live at peace with us - on their own terms." But Nationalism is not his only theme. Another, of course, is Christianity, expressed with an intellectual liberalism, even ambiguity, that does not conceal a faith like a rock.

Where he is most at home, and least unhappy (for the idea of Welshness, and of the state of Wales, clearly torments him), is when he writes of poetry, and above all his own practice of it. When he tries to generalize, as in "Words and the Poet", an address to the University of Swansea, his modesty before his grave and gowned audience puts him in such an endearing tangle he talks what looks suspiciously like waffle: "Words are made of consonants, vowels and syllables, accented and unaccented. These in turn give rise to texture, pitch and rhythm. That is, there are long words and short words, soft and shrill, sharp and blunt . . ."

But in "The Making of a Poem", when he relies on the first person, he is intimate, entertaining and instructive. He deplores the intertailing of "columnists and reviewers" in the sober matter of a poem, which is a near-irrelevance - and this cannot be insisted upon too often. (He accuses himself, however, of occasional lapses into propaganda in his verse.)

There is simplicity in Thomas, austere yet humane, and when such a man dialyses so much of what has been done to the world, and patiently re-assesses quite different values, we should listen.

The man who loved and haunted himself

Frances Morris

DYLAN THOMAS
The Collected Stories
 384pp. Dent. £8.50.
 0460046 039

These stories, gathered in one volume for the first time, provide a curious silhouette of Dylan Thomas's writing life. The earliest ones are strained, inward, vaguely channell and obscene, practice for the poems, but much more private; the latest, mostly designed for broadcasting, have the famous lift lifting the words off the page and into the air, and are public, sentimental and detached. In between, he has found his comic tone, and a habit of reminiscence. What is striking, though, is that he's always looking - forwards or back - to a self that eludes him. In the beginning, it's the writer he means to be; later, the child he was. End to end, the stories make up a daunting commentary on the various modes of self-consciousness.

In one of the very earliest pieces, "Jarley's", exhumed from the Swansea Grammar School Magazine for 1933, he imagines "a smart lad who could talk English" taking a job with the travelling waxworks, and becoming so absorbed in his work that he turns to wax himself and joins the line-up as "the figure of a Welsh Druid in a long white shirt". The inspiration, doubtless, was Dickens crossed with the movies, and the stories of the next year or

so suggest similar sources (Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde), plus of course Bible Christianity and folk and fairy tales. The landscapes are luminous and sodden, the supporting players are idiots, mad scientists, tinkers, ministers and scarecrows, and the figure at the centre is struggling to make a world of words:

He sharpened his pencil and shut the sky out, shook back his untidy hair, arranged the papers of a devilish story on his desk, and broke the pencil-point with a too-hard scribble of "sea" and "fire" on a clean page. Fire would not set the ruled lines alight, adventure, burning, through the heartless characters, nor water close over the boggy heads and the unwritten words. The story was dead from the devil up; there was a white-hot tree with apples where a frozen tower with owls should have rocked in a wind from Antarctica. . . .

This passage is from "The Orchards", and perhaps owes its explicitness about his battles with his phantoms to the fact that it was revised for publication in 1936. It's not really untypical, however: he does see himself as a creator in Frankenstein's sense, dabbling in corpses to make life, aping the mystery of the incarnation. Sometimes the effects are mild - "Peace, like a simile, lay over the roofs of the town"; at other times (perhaps) playful - "Real things kept changing places with unreal, and, as a bird burst into song, he heard the springs rattle far back in its throat." Most often they are Gothic, especially when he's engaged in conjuring up one of his fearsome witch-woman lovers:

A being had been born, not out of the womb, but out of the soul and the spinning head. . . . He had given a woman being. His flesh would be upon her, and the

life that he had given her would make her walk, talk and sing. . . .

Whereupon, again like Frankenstein, he gets frightened, and turns over a fresh page, and writes "The woman died."

These early dream-lovers die for another reason too - because he's busy loving himself. The guilty obsession with the mystery of birth links writing and masturbation, broken pencils and spilt seed:

Out of the webbed sea-pig and water-nudging fish a white pool spat in his palm. . . . And, after the anchor burrowing through blind cloud, he rowed and sailed, that the world might happen to him once, past the events of revolving islands and elastic hills, on the common sea.

Here, in "An Adventure from Work in Progress" (in 1939), he can emerge, almost, from the lonely dream-world, with its seas of spilt ink, and part company with "the undead of Wales". He has, after all, brought himself to birth, with his success as a poet; he no longer need complain that "the tree was made of words". However, in the prose at least, it seems that no sooner is the Word made Flesh than he again loses touch with himself, finds memory and anecdote taking him back to contemplate with longing the young pretender he once was, in "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog" and "Adventures in the Skin Trade". These groups of stories are (still) alive, and funny, but they have an uncomfortable air, too, of serving up the provincial Bohemian as a "character", a timeless innocent. This way lies the ritual celebration of the child's Christmas,

of August Monday, of the (Pickwickian) Club outing - and the extraordinary "Return Journey", broadcast in 1947, which has Thomas searching Swansea for his younger self:

Above medium height for Wales, I mean, he's five foot six and a half. Thick blubber lips; snub nose; curly mousebrown hair; one front tooth broken after playing a game called Cats and Dogs, in the Mermaid, Mumbles; speaks rather fancy; truculent; plausible; a bit of a shower off. . . .

And on and on. He pursues himself through time, back to school, and beyond, until he's told the child died. Or wasn't born at all?

In an affectionate foreword to this volume, Leslie Norris says that this particular script evokes "the ghost of Dylan Thomas . . . the man, his warmth, his voices" in its voice-over. But, as I have been saying, Thomas seems to have haunted himself when alive, too. One final quotation, from "The Crumbs of One Man's Year", broadcast in 1946:

"Lovers", I said to myself. . . . Discourteously I shone my torch. There in the thick rain, a young man and a young woman stood, very close together, near the hedge that whirled in the wind. And a yard from them, another young man sat steadily on the grass verge, holding an open book from which he appeared to read. . . .

There is almost always a voice left over in the stories, and perhaps - though it seems a simple-minded explanation - the relation between spoken and written words holds a key to the division: Welsh-English being, to Thomas's early bardic perception, pre-eminently the language of speech, while he was to be a book-poet. But then one reflects that this too was a cross he consciously bore, an aspect of his self-dramatization. The echo-chamber effect makes it very difficult to hear what he's not saying. Like the double-men of the early stories - Rhys Rhys, the incestuous minister or David Davies ("Dai Twice") - he turns the comforting commonplaces, the child being father to the man and so on, into models of infinite regress.

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Idiom. Each short chapter is like the stealthy over-winding of a clockwork malevolence that springs its assembled characters into action at the appointed hour. There is at times, though, a sense of *décalage* between this energetic diabolical farce, and the underlying theme running counter to it.

Put crudely, that theme is a modern variation on Rousseau's belief in the saving innocence of childhood and *bonificat* Nature. Although Charlotte's salvation, helped by a reformed alcoholic tramp turned wise-man-of-nature, strikes a rather sentimental note, it is consonant with the fairytale element, and balanced by a robust, commonsense child

A queer fish

John Melmoth

MILES GIBSON
The Sandman
 179pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
 0434 291307

Miles Gibson's first novel not only confounds received notions of good taste but also poses a discomfiting moral problem, in that it contrives to be funny about the doings of a mass murderer. This is not achieved by the pulling of punches. The violence is real enough: one woman is stabbed, screaming in the bath, two elderly ladies are casually dispatched in their parlour. There are a number of parallels with the career of the Yorkshire Ripper. Loontjes queue up to confess to the killings, hoax telephone calls are made to the television news, the real culprit is briefly interviewed by the police who have already decided that he cannot be their man. Nor are the victims made unlikable or otherwise placed beyond the scope of sympathy: they are ordinary, banal, sometimes drunk, feeble or helpless, always unsuspecting.

The Sandman takes the form of a journal which is simultaneously self-regarding and naive; by this trick the narrative is redeemed from simple nastiness. On the one hand, the killer has a camp sense of melodrama: "I could not guess that I was destined to become a monster, a loathsome creature of the night." He casts himself as *Siva*, Doctor Death, the Hammer-Sandman, the Golden Reaper, the Hammer-Smith Horror, the Monster of Malda Vale. More vauntingly, he believes himself heir to a more vauntingly, he believes himself heir to a more secret tradition which has cast a shadow across history. He is the eternal irritant, the snake in the grass - "When I die, I shall return to the world as a fatal disease for which there is no remedy." On the other hand, his jaunty cap-

It's ironic that a first novel of such singularity should send one searching for fictional categories in which to place it, but *The Saint* prompts speculation on affinities with the reworkings of myth and fairytale in Angela Carter's macabre fantasies; the influence of the author's illustrative work for Borges, Coover and children's literature; Cynthia Ozick's imaginative discussions on a particular history of scholastic religious orthodoxies. Yet even a variation on current modes - say, diabolical period realism - seems a loose baggy holdall when applied to Rikki Ducornet's highly disciplined extravaganza.

Born into a late-nineteenth-century rural French community rife with religious superstition, Charlotte arrives with an enormous birthmark in the form of a leaping hare, a stain that proves both curse and salvation in her semi-orphan state. The facial disfigurement bars her from village school, so her development is peculiarly dependent on an unholy caricature of the Trinity. *In loco parentis* are Aunt Edna, a dedicated religious fanatic, dispensing the bile of human unkindness with a scrubbing brush to erase the stigma of Charlotte's sin, and uncle Emile, mild, loving and a martyr for others' sins, whose theology derives from his passion for gardening, and who teaches Charlotte to read and write from seed catalogues. As spiritual advisor there's the local exorcist: he catalogues his world and its inhabitants - with particular reference to their faces - thus explicating the divine order until, his professional abilities falling under the one power, he switches to the other: Charlotte's face proclaims her a gift from the Devil, and she will be his ultimate reward.

To this trio is added a gallery of grotesques of various bizarre sexual and theological persuasions, usually introduced in ferociously funny yet pieces - lewd local wedding, a peep show of the Missing Link. The scatological ribaldry owes much to medieval bawdy, blasphemy and anti-clericalism; when Charlotte's growing belief in a vocation for sainthood leads her to a convent (and fun and frolics for the exorcist, limited transgressive to continue as mentor) there are echoes of pulp Gothic's sado-tronically in a more explicit contemporary

for all the world

In pursuit of the principles

Gerald Stone

ROMAN JAKOBSON and KRYSTYNA POMORSKA
Dialogues
186pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50.
0521 251133

two, obscure their interrelation.

The extraordinary breadth of Jakobson's scholarship is only partially reflected in the range of subjects touched on in these dialogues. They include approaches to folklore (including his rehabilitation of the idea of collective creation), the language alliance (*Sprachbund*), the concept of markedness, parallelisms in verse and prose; metaphor and metonymy, the role of biography in literary studies, Czech poetry, Slavonic mythology, and semiotics. Despite the ostensibly intimate nature of the medium there is minimal revelation of Jakobson's real self. We learn nothing, for example, of his reactions to the Russian Revolution or the Second World War. On September 1, 1939, the day of his arrival in Oslo, he appears (from the fifth Dialogue) to have had his thoughts firmly on linguistics. Yet it is difficult to believe that at such a time even he could have been quite so single-minded.

Among those who attended meetings of the Moscow Circle was the poet, Mayakovsky. His interest in the linguistic approach to poetry, complemented by Jakobson's interest in poetic experimentation, formed the basis of their

damental revision. His book *Noveyshaya russkaya poeziya* (Recent Russian Poetry), delivered and discussed at a meeting of the Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1919 and published in Prague in 1921, is primarily a study of Khlebnikov's verse, though it also deals with poetic language in general. It uses traditional phonetic terms, but there is already the hint of a phonological approach in the statement: "Euphony does not operate with sounds, but with phonemes." These matters are discussed here in the third Dialogue, "Verse and the Sounds of Language".

On his way to Prague in 1920, on the boat between Tallin and Stettin, Jakobson became absorbed in the poetry of the Czech Romantic poet, Karel Hynek Mácha, and asked a Czech fellow-passenger to read the verses aloud. "I was struck", he says, "by the profound uniqueness in structure between iambic tetrameter in Russian and in Czech, and I was particularly astonished by the variety of rhythmical deviations from the metrical pattern that the Czech iamb permitted, but which in Russian were totally impossible." He decided to study these questions further and on arrival in Prague

the *Cours de linguistique générale*. As a Futurist, he had been preoccupied with questions of time. "Our thoughts on time were directly inspired by the current discussions on the theory of relativity, with its rejection of time as an absolute and its coordination of the problems of time and space." His attention was therefore immediately drawn to the view of synchrony and diachrony propounded in the *Cours*, a view which by the late 1920s he came to reject. He perceived that in Saussure's doctrine synchrony was equated to a static state and diachrony to dynamism. But (he says) "these two effective oppositions, synchrony/diachrony and static/dynamic, do not coincide in reality. Synchrony contains many a dynamic element, and it is necessary to take this into account when using a synchronic approach." He also rejected the Saussurean view of the fortuitous nature of sound change. Jakobson's own idea that linguistic changes are systematic and goal-orientated and that "the evolution of language shares its purposefulness with the development of other sociocultural systems" was first formulated in a letter to Trubetzkoy written in October 1922. This and other aspects of his theory of diachronic phonology, elaborated in *Remarques sur l'évolution phonologique du russe comparée à celle des autres langues slaves* (1929) and "Principes de phonologie historique" (1930) constituted a significant advance and have remained valid to the present day.

During his brief stay in Denmark in 1939, Jakobson studied the acquisition of the phonological system by children from different linguistic areas. Later, in Sweden, with the personal assistance of V. I. Jacobowsky, the head of the psychiatric clinic in Uppsala, he was able to conduct a project of research into aphasia. The result was his *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals* (first published in German) (1941), in which he revealed a mirror-image relationship between phonological losses in aphasia and the order of acquisition of distinctive oppositions by children. The circumstances in which this work was carried out are mentioned briefly in the fifth Dialogue, "The Effects of International Experience on the Development of Linguistic Theory". Jakobson's subsequent explorations in the pathology of language, leading to his reinterpretations of the traditional distinction between "sensory" and "motor" aphasia, are discussed in another Dialogue, "Similarity and Contiguity in Language and Literature, in the Cinema, and in Aphasia".

In his later years his attention was increasingly concentrated again on the use of linguistic methods in the interpretation of literature. He summed up some of his thoughts on this subject in his closing statement, "Linguistics and Poetics" delivered to a conference at Indiana University in 1958. In his attempt to answer the question "What makes a verbal message a work of art?" he later examined the distribution and aesthetic function of grammatical categories in many individual poetic works, observing symmetry and regularity of grammatical oppositions. He demonstrated these principles in the analysis of English, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Greek, Russian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Slovene, Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian, Old Church Slavonic and Japanese poems. These individual analyses have proved to be most controversial and, to some minds, least satisfactory part of his total output. It is, perhaps, a pity that in these dialogues there is no debate and that the main performer is always allowed to have his own way. There are few references to his critics, except in the twelfth Dialogue, "Poetry and Grammar", where two pages are devoted to refuting the chapter on "Jakobson's Poetic Analyses" in Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*.

We should not allow Jakobson's brilliant contributions to general linguistic theory to outshine the specifically Slavonic side of his work. His discovery of the principles behind the metre of Serbian epic verse, his research on the authenticity of the *Igor Tale* and his analysis of the Russian verb may perhaps be regarded as his most important contributions to Slavonic studies, but a full account would also have to include his work on such subjects as comparative Slavonic accentology and phonology, Russian dialectology, the Czech accent and Slavonic mythology.

Theirs and ours

Eugen Weber

ROGER MAGRAW
France 1814-1915: The Bourgeois Century
412pp. Fontana. Paperback, £4.95.
0006357415

This second volume in the Fontana History of Modern France is a good and useful book, well worth reading by specialists, and a bargain for students already acquainted with the period it covers who are in search of critical discussion of current interpretations and an up-to-date bibliography.

Roger Magraw's pace is necessarily brisk, and the uninitiated may find some references and allusions hard to follow, the more so since the volume lacks even the simplest map. He offers copious and many-sided coverage of the Restoration and July Monarchy ("The France of the Notables"), 1848 and the Second Empire ("The Challenge from Below") and the rather precarious - "Bourgeois Republic". Though I do not recognize some of the views attributed to me in Chapter Nine, the author is generally fair, and generous in presenting different views of complex questions; and his relatively traditional approach, stressing politics and economics (but not economicism) conveys a great deal of information.

Magraw recognizes 1830 as a revolution of frustrated careerists, identifies prosperity - not repression - as the key to Bonapartist success, and relations between capitalist state and a growing labour movement as the "real" issue of politics in the 1900s. He tempers criticism of

French entrepreneurial performance, modifies the stereotype of unenterprising French businessmen, explains that demographic stagnation under the Third Republic did not imply economic passivity, shows the working classes hesitating between bourgeoisification and militancy, and the peasantry between assimilation and cultural deprivation, constantly reminding us the while that every generalization conceals a host of particular situations. In the end, the bourgeois hegemony turns out less than complete, and national integration no more than national alienation in red trousers; for the tradition that the state is "theirs", not "ours", affects most social groups. Torn apart by historical, social, economic and cultural rancours, what, then, can the French commune in? Their Frenchness, surely; a common heritage whose inculcation is probably the great achievement of the age chronicled.

This does not come out in a book which balances its virtues with a strong strain of Marxist analysis. Such an approach can be suggestive, as when Magraw indicates how the Republic's need to woo petty producers precluded over-rapid capital concentration. It can also be mistaken (bourgeois *juries* did not regard property as more sacred than life), unhelpful (identifying Republicans, anti-clericals or the Ligue de l'enseignement as "capitalist" doesn't tell us much), misleading (comparing anti-clericalism's function for the Left to that of antisemitism for the Right ignores the solid reasons for the former), contradictory (leaving workers to illiteracy and squalor is capitalist exploitation, trying to improve their lot is manipulation and cultural hegemony).

Second attempt

R. N. Gildea

MAURICE AGULHON
The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852
211pp. Cambridge University Press. £20 (paperback, £5.95).
0521 248289

The Second Republic was almost an accident: of course there was street-fighting in February 1848, but power merely switched from one section of the French bourgeoisie to another. No defeat overturned the existing régime, as in 1792 or 1870. If Raspail and the building workers had not marched on the Hôtel de Ville on the fourth day of the revolution and forced the provisional government to proclaim the Republic, 1848 would have been little different from 1830. The traditional economy of France, based on the small workshop and smallholding, was threatened by capitalism, but social struggles were the effect rather than the cause of the change of political control. Nor did the Republic have anything to do with socialism. The official response to unemployment was not the authorization of productive associations but hard labour for navvies. When these work-sites became a danger to public order they were shut down, and the workers of eastern Paris who rose in protest were crushed by the bourgeoisie in arms.

The advantage of Maurice Agulhon's book, a translation of the French edition of 1973, is that it gathers momentum half-way through 1848, where the study of Georges Dupeux finishes. It is particularly strong on the polarization of politics, after the election of the President of the Republic, between the ruling party of order, composed of moderate republicans and royalists, and the *Montagne* or *démocratie*, who were campaigning for the "République démocratique et sociale". Agulhon rescues the peculiarly French conception of extreme democracy with a "red shift" towards socialism from the narrow criticisms of Marx, who saw this attitude as an illusory attempt to bridge the widening class gap, and demonstrates that the *Montagne* of 1849 was supported not only by intellectuals and artisans, but also by the peasantry of central and southern France. For the republicans were able to confront the natural deference of the peasant to his *curé* and *châtelain* by another organization based on the club, café and village festival: politics appropriated the carnival while the "Republic without republicans".

It becomes clear that in the case of France a geographical explanation of political options has more to offer than a class analysis. Agulhon underlines the importance of regional variations, and supports his argument with a profusion of maps. He suggests that the "geography of public opinion" in France is substantially the same today as it was in 1849. It is a pity that he assumes that the political awakening of the French people dates only from the Second Republic, and hence tries to explain the original options in terms of land tenure or "Occitan culture" rather than in terms of past conflicts. The men of the Second Republic inherited the political vocabulary of the First. Why then suppose that they did not inherit its divisions? Did the 1790s ten years' strife leave the political landscape of France unfurrowed?

The republican experiment was above all in universal suffrage. The militants of the clubs complained that the date of the elections to the Constituent Assembly, barely six weeks after the change of regime, gave them no time to educate the electorate, which duly followed its natural leaders to the urns. But in the election of the President of the Republic in December 1848, the masses broke away from both royalist and republican notables and gave their votes heavily in favour of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Agulhon denounces this as the reflection of political illiteracy. Likewise, he equates the Republic with the reign of law without asking in whose interest was the law of May 31, 1850, passed by the reactionary Legislative Assembly in order to disenfranchise three million of the "vile multitude", and dismisses Bonapartism as scorn for law, although Bonaparte re-established universal suffrage on the night of his *coup d'état*.

The coup against the Assembly both defeated a conspiracy to restore the Orleanist dynasty and knocked popular support away from the republican leaders. Resistance to it was limited, because the French masses saw it as a timely blow against oligarchy. To argue that only the education reforms of the Third Republic could wean the ignorant peasants away from Bonapartism is to swallow the rhetoric of republican reformers. It was under the prosperous Second Empire that children surged into the elementary schools, and as many millions acclaimed the imperial constitution of 1870 as had acclaimed that of 1852. In May 1870, Gambetta sighed that the Empire was stronger than ever. Agulhon refuses to face the possibility that the Empire was more popular than the "Republic without republicans".

If the book were silly, such ramblings would irritate less. It isn't the Marxism, which, outside Russia, is no sin. But does "the exact blend of cynical manipulation and democratic idealism" really matter in the end; and need the question, when it arises, be so relentlessly resolved in favour of the former view? To say that Ferry was "manipulating education in the interests of capitalist elites" is humbug. We may think what we will about Ferry's convictions, but they are as evident in his private letters as in his rhetoric. Primary education and "petty-bourgeois moralizing", advocacy of thrift, sobriety, hard work and such, were more than social reform on the cheap. In an imperfect world they provided reasonable recipes for improvement, introduced many to dignity and self-respect. The mythology of social mobility by educational opportunity "proved seductive" because, for many, it worked. And if the Bon Marché was "a potent symbol of bourgeois hegemony", it also represented the new wealth, urbanity and accessibility that "hegemony" managed to generate.

Placed in the informative context which Magraw provides, coat-trailing of this sort

should generate discussion, and that is no bad thing. But it fails to make clear the major theme of French history since 1789: a Franco-French war which class conflict can spur or structure but does not adequately explain, which economic prosperity assuages but does not end, which economic crisis sharpens but does not cause, that every generation learns afresh from print, but also from experience. It is not enough to suggest that, since high- and low-mindedness often go together, youthful ideals have a proclivity to curdle. And the dialectic of revolution and reaction goes just so far to interpret the paranoid dimensions of public and private history over two hundred years. But it does look as if collective memory and schooling have conspired to perpetuate the script of 1789-94 in a series of self-fulfilling parodies, inculcating principles easier to forsake than to forget, instilling resentment of the *mauvaise foi* of others and uneasiness about one's own. No history of modern France will really cut close to the bone till it attempts to trace how this has spilled over into social relations, how it affects the nation and its politics, the French and their lives.

High minds and tight fists

P. S. Lewis

C. T. ALLMAND
Lancastrian Normandy, 1415-1450
The History of a Medieval Occupation
349pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0 1922642 X

"Occupations" are never plain to deal with; motives are apparently inextricably confused in the fog of historiography; saints and martyrs are bad for sanity and anyone who deals levelly with them is accused of bad taste. C. T. Allmand has written an excellent book on the Plantagenet occupation of Normandy in the fifteenth century. The Plantagenets had as good a formal claim to the duchy as the Valois; but in the fifteenth century they and their nobility (unlike their forebears a hundred years earlier) spoke English, not a strange, though identifiably French, patois: xenophobia, or patriotism, had set in. Patriotism is, of course, a matter of period attitudes, and those attitudes form the historian too, and his interpretation of his documents: after all, they are all he's got. Some years ago, a bilingual edition of a book on France and England appeared; set out on the back of the French edition was the following: "Français et Anglais se sont combattus avec acharnement pendant des siècles; aujourd'hui encore, malentendus et incompréhensions sont monnaie courante. Mais si la sympathie pour le voisin tourne finalement à l'exaspération, la haine entre les deux peuples a été souvent accompagnée d'une certaine fascination... Haines vives et ententes plus au moins cordiales... une paradoxale mais authentique symbiose a uni Anglais et Français pendant dix siècles."

Allmand has dealt as sanely and as plainly with the subject as anyone can (his alternative dedication of the book is "Duabus patris melis"). One might, I suppose, be forgiven for having hoped that K. B. McFarlane was right in thinking that the supporters of the Plantagenet kings of France cleaned out the supporters of the Valois kings of France pretty effectively. In the end they didn't: a John Fastolf could get his loot out; others didn't.

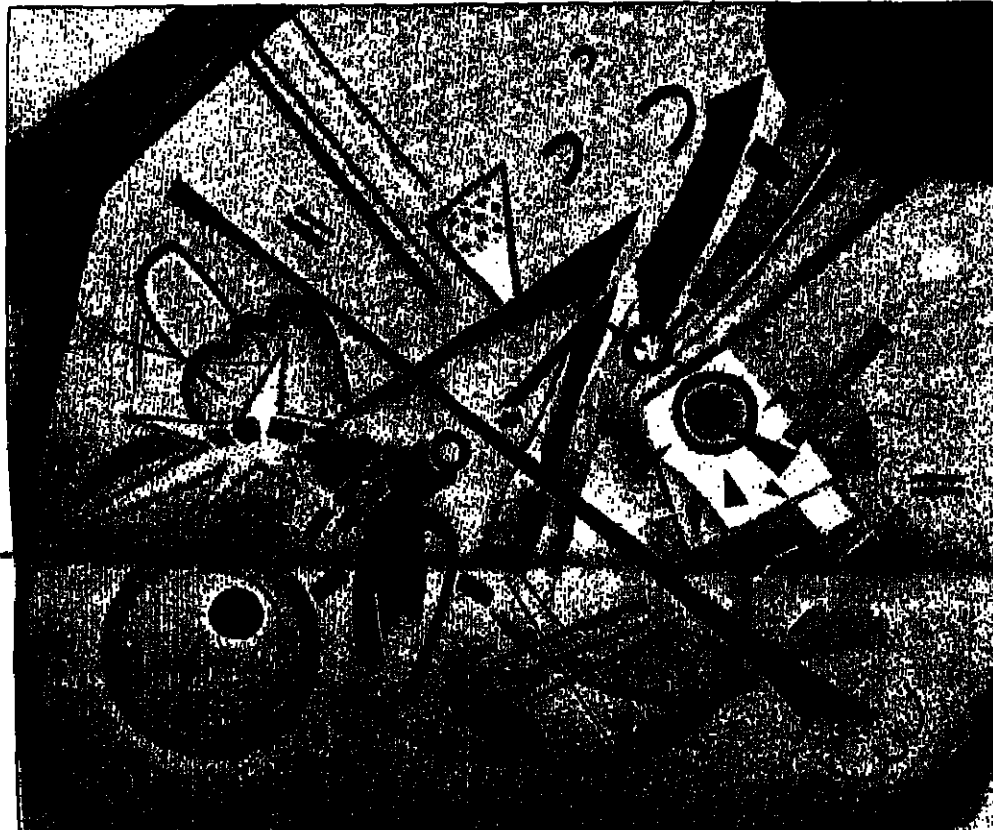
Except the few that remained in France. Some old English occupying families had remained there since the last century, the Harpends, for instance, for generations: *paradoxe, mais authentique*. In the early hours of June 14, 1440, Churchill telegraphed Paul Reynaud, "We take this opportunity of proclaiming the *indissoluble union* of our two peoples and of our two Empires", but when an *aide-archiviste* in Montauban, I suppose twenty years ago, could become incensed by English undergraduates asking "Wasn't it true the bridge was built by the Black Prince?" one might well wonder about that *indissolubility*. *Authentique symbiose*, however: Allmand has got as close to realizing this as anyone reasonably can.

(Churchill's "indissoluble union" did not take place, any more than dual monarchy of France

and England expressed in those two shields, of France and England, on Anglo-French coinage. Curiously, the English (since the invasion of Fishguard) do not seem all that much to have commemorated the victories they won in the eventually unsuccessful *Gallia* wars (how many Agincourt Avenues, how many Crécy Crescents? Allmand gives us the opposite picture - rue de Patay, rue Domrémy. For that matter how many statues of Jeanne d'Arc were there before the Franco-Prussian war?). And yet there was an attempt at a community in Normandy. Such communities - and call them "colonial" if you really want to - had worked elsewhere. They had worked (*pace the aide-archiviste* in Montauban) in south-west France; they had worked (*pace others*) in Wales. An ardent member of the *Cymdeithas yr Iarth* might regard Conwy as a symbol of an ancient oppression, as much, I suppose, as someone bearing the *drakkar* of Normandy as a car-sticker might regard the former prefecture of Seine-Maritime. What makes the mentality of a *résistant*?

In the end one cannot give an answer: one can only say what happened. It would on the whole have been perfectly reasonable for the French in France to have abandoned the Valois and accepted the Plantagenet king of France. Given the elastic sanity prevalent at the time this could have happened. It probably - or possibly - wouldn't have lasted: the Channel can be very rough, and enough barriers exist on land to this day to give one solid doubt. But it was not unreasonable in the minds of people in the fifteenth century to think that it might have done so. Thankfully, one can say that most people hold land higher than principle: perhaps it is only the landless that can afford to be principled. What went wrong in France was that the people at home who had no interest in the colonies got, not only fits of principle, but also fits of not wanting to stomp up for them: high-mindedness and narrow-listedness went well together, and the colonials went home (though not from Wales, but then, they were different there). But before rodomontade starts: one might think plainly about occupations. Read the beginning of Jean de Bueil's *Jouvenel*; patrols with blackened faces, on spavined horses, from damp barn billies, passing the "enemy" in the night, saddle-sore, with the wet leather rough around their wrists, not noticing each other. That patrol was "French": *la guerre est infinie*. In the end the English, the Plantagenet ex-French, left France. But it was tough and go.

It should, I hope, be clear that Allmand's task in writing this book was a particularly delicate one. To maintain a balance between an appreciation of "nationalism" and "patriotism", and the evidence of those terms' emptiness before the interests consecrated in their name, all the illusions and the false ideals and the courage, in a distant context, needs its own courage, and its own ideals, and its own lack of illusion. One can only wish more people had them - at least as historians, that is.



Kandinsky's "On Gray", 1923, reproduced from Kandinsky at the Guggenheim by Vivian Endicott Barnett (311pp. Abbeville Press, 505 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022. £25. 0 88659 398 3).

friendship, which was terminated only by the poet's suicide in April 1930. Mayakovsky was introduced by Jakobson to Theodore Nette, a Soviet diplomatic courier with linguistic and literary interests who was subsequently killed abroad by train Mayakovsky would sometimes share a compartment with Nette, and in their conversations the name of their friend "Romka" Jakobson would frequently appear. Thus it came about that in his poem "To Comrade Nette - Steamship and Man" Mayakovsky immortalized not only the name of the heroic courier, but also that of Jakobson (in the line "you chatted all night of Romka Jakobson"). A considerable part of Jakobson's book *O cheskom silke, preliushcheshenno v sopostavlenii s russkim* (On Czech Verse, Primarily in Comparison with Russian) (1923) is devoted to Mayakovsky's principles of versification and results from discussions between Jakobson and the poet.

Jakobson first began to read the poetry of Khlebnikov in 1912. His opinion, formed then, that Khlebnikov was "the greatest Russian poet of our century" never changed and may be taken as evidence of Jakobson's slight eccentricity in matters of literary judgment. Before he entered the University he knew personally both Khlebnikov and another "supraconscious" poet (*poet-zaimnik*), Aleksey Kruchenykh. The young Jakobson was himself a fervent Futurist and, using the pseudonym R. Alyanov, collaborated with Kruchenykh in the publication in 1916 of a book of *supraconscious* verse entitled *Zaibnyaya giga* (sic). But it was also analysis of Khlebnikov's verse that led him to doubt the conventional view among linguists of the time that the Russian language is a "bundle of distinctive properties". The distinctive features theory, as elaborated in *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis* (1952) (written in collaboration with C. G. M. Fant and M. Halle) and *Fundamentals of Language* (1956), is Jakobson's most important single contribution to general linguistics; but it is only one of many subjects on which he changed existing opinion. Though he had been introduced in 1917 to the essentials of Saussure's linguistic doctrine (by S. I. Karasevsky, who had just returned to Moscow after studying in Geneva), it was not until 1920, shortly after his arrival in Prague, that Jakobson became directly acquainted with

spoke to Emil Smetánka, who told him: "Our poets are simply such idlers that they are too lazy to write according to the rules." This queer explanation only increased Jakobson's curiosity, which led in due course to *O cheskom silke*. . . . Here the approach is definitely phonological and based on a theory of distinctive oppositions.

It was the difference between stressed/unstressed and long/short encountered in the comparison of Czech and Russian verse that directed Jakobson's attention to the study of binary oppositions. He soon progressed to other pairs of sounds that lent themselves to similar analysis, such as voiced/voiceless pairs of consonants. Towards the end of the 1920s he came to recognize a special type of phonological relation to which he applied the term *correlation* (ie, a binary opposition carried by more than one pair of phonemes). This raised doubts as to the indivisibility of the phoneme. It became apparent that it was possible to analyse a phoneme into a number of distinctive features such as vocalicity, nasality, sonority, etc; and so the "linguistic atom" was replaced by the "bundle of distinctive properties". The distinctive features theory, as elaborated in *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis* (1952) (written in collaboration with C. G. M. Fant and M. Halle) and *Fundamentals of Language* (1956), is Jakobson's most important single contribution to general linguistics; but it is only one of many subjects on which he changed existing opinion.

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Handwritten note in the right margin: "The book is a very good introduction to Jakobson's work." (written vertically)

